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“American Niggunim – Passionate Davening”
Monday May 8, 2006 9:30 a.m.
Presenter: Rabbi Charles Simon

(Alberto Mizrahi)

We're here not so much to present a finished product – in fact it's nowhere near finished, it's just beginning – but to present a report on an initiative that's taking place. And I'm going to let Rabbi Simon, Chuck Simon of the Federation of Jewish Men's Clubs, explain to us the process by which this thing began. But, alternatively, it is called “Passionate Davening.” (*Audience member makes request.*) Ah. It's impossible to understand what I'm saying – it feels like I'm under water. That's what you're telling me. (*Another comment from audience.*) Yeah, well I'm telling him now. Can you do something like give me a little less bass, maybe, I don't know. (*Audience input.*) Too much reverb. That's better...much better, because I'm not so close to the microphone. In fact, this is even better, I'll bet. And if I do this (*voice fading*)...(audience laughter)...it's amazing! Oh, you can still hear me – wait let me go out the room ... see what happens. (*Laughter*)

It's called alternatively – it's called “Passionate Davening”, *v'karev p'zurenu*, to bring in the hoards and hoards of people that are missing from our synagogues and whatever the hell you want to call it. I really don't care what you call it. What we are doing will be explained by Chuck Simon. Then we're going to have a few people who are in pilot programs come up and speak to us about how far they are into the program, and then I'm gonna go over a few things that I've found to be successful in my congregation. Many of you are doing the same things. I laud it, I laud you, and I applaud you. Some of you are doing even better, more exciting things, in which case I'd love for you to share because this is going to be an interactive morning.

What we want is not only to tell you what's happening with us and how it came to happen, but I want your ideas so that we can best understand how it is that we can help those people who have not yet quite gotten onto the retooling for the 21st Century sort of track. OK? And if you have a problem with it, we'll hear that too. So, without further ado, Rabbi Charles Simon, Chuck Simon – the Executive Director (or is it President?) – Executive Director of the Federation of Jewish Men's Clubs.

(Applause)

Chuck Simon

Everybody can hear me out there, yes. I'd like to do this as kind of a report to the assembly. Let me explain to you about “Passionate Davening”, not going into the standing room only.... (*Speaker is not at microphone...could not understand remainder of sentence*).

Our program began. We began last July at the Federation of Jewish Men's Club *Biennial* Convention. During the course of Shabbat morning, we had experimented with *p'suke d'zimra* -- repeating niggunim, a little bit of teaching. We looked at our time a little differently and felt that we were able to build, over the course, a Shabbat morning with 500 or 600 individuals there, a congregation that gave back -- a congregation that provided you with energy. I always look at the litmus test of a congregation as whether or not the congregation can give back. You know many of us have this kind of vampiric relationship with the congregation where you give and you give, and they take and they take. Well, the idea was can we reverse this, can we make it work. And we were just astounded by the results that we received.

And walking out into the dining hall afterwards, my out-going and in-coming Presidents said, “Gee, this is a *shul* I'd like to belong to. If we could only figure a way out, a way where we could market this and develop this further.” And, like an idiot, I said, “It's really just a question of time and money. If you really want to do this, let's think about how it can be done. And, first, let's go talk to the Cantors Assembly.” And so, we went to Steve and we began a series of dialogues, which resulted in this program.

What we attempted to do was to create 10 to 15 models in different synagogues throughout North America that were geographically and culturally different. Where the Rabbi and Cantor worked well together and there was a Men's Club that either could take this up because they were strong enough or needed this to strengthen them – which would serve as kind of a marketing team. And we didn't know what would happen. Frankly, we don't know what's going to happen. Nothing like this has ever been done before, but it sounded good on paper.

So Alberto and I kind of made a cross list of Rabbis and Cantors, looking for the long list of say 35 to 40 teams. And I was surprised how quickly we were actually able to get 25 teams where we had a Rabbi and a Cantor who got along. I feel like Abraham ... only 25? Well, 25 came easily and then we cross-referenced it with Men's Clubs and we developed a short list of about 15 congregations. Currently we have 9 pilots in operation. I'll give you a brief rundown of where they are and what they're doing in a few minutes.

There were certain basic assumptions that we made. One is that we were trying to figure out a way to get more people to come to *shul* and so any congregation which entered into this pilot committed to a year's study, a year's work, a year's process. And that this process would result in something, which was indigenous growth – in other words, nothing was trying --- we were not trying to impose anything onto a congregation externally. We were not trying to change the congregation, it's culture, by instituting instrumental music if it was not their nature to have instrumental music, and so on and so forth.

And the third component was that we needed to also -- in addition to getting a congregation involved in this process (which I'll explain in a few moments) -- we also needed to start to think about what type of music would resonate with our congregants, and their children, and our children 10 years down the road. And this is where Alberto came in. I did the process work. He did the music work. And so we began a process of trying to think about, how do we create new music?

Let me explain a little about the process. Rabbi and Cantor would say, well to improve attendance at "X" service (it could be *Kabbalat Shabbat* and *Maariv*, it could be *Maariv*, it could be *Shaharit*, it could be *Shabbat* Morning), ... whatever it is we choose. So select one service. And we brought the Men's Club in as a marketing arm and everybody agreed to suspend normal thinking. Everything was up for grabs. And so the group began to ask questions like:

"Is the service too long?"

"Is the service too short?"

"Is the time that services are running the most flexible and the most workable times for our community?"

"Does the Rabbi speak enough?"

"Does the Rabbi speak too much?"

"Should more pages be announced?"

"Should less pages be announced?" You know we're not idiots. Why are you announcing pages every 2 seconds?

"What kind of mood should be created in services?"

And, of course, the first question we asked is "How should one feel when they leave a service?" Because, if you don't know how you're going to feel when you leave, then how can you possibly plan and create a mood that's going to resonate with our members.

And so we began a process of involving lay leadership and professionals into this dialogue. Similarly then music became a key part and the role that music had, and one other thing which we found was very important – and this is – and that is we felt that, if lay people were involved in thinking in this process, that they would feel ownership. And if they felt ownership, they would come and they would bring their friends. And you'll hear this from the pilot groups that are running.

So what's happened is -- what was started as an initial group of Men's Club people (because they had to say yes, they wanted to do this) -- this group was expanded into a larger group that perhaps involved people from ritual. Members of the Sisterhood, people who don't come to *shul* at all, young families, empty nesters, whatever the group, the targeted population group was that the core group had determined was needed to make this service work.

Just think about what would happen if you were a member of a *shul* and the phone rang and it was the Rabbi or the Cantor on the phone. Well, today I happen to belong to a *shul*, so you know what happens when the phone rings I think, "What do they want?" "How much is it going to be?" But here we have a situation that is totally different. The phone rings and the Rabbi or the Cantor says, "Hello *Sh'lomo*, this is the Rabbi. Would you be willing to come to a meeting and think with me? I'm very concerned about what happens in our synagogue at *Kabbalat Shabbat and Maariv*. And I know you don't come to *shul* very often, but you represent a sizable portion of our congregation and I'd like to hear what would work for you. Would you come and join us?" Well, as a member of the *shul* I would be so flattered that my Rabbi or Cantor had called me. And I certainly have opinions on everything when it comes to *t'filah* that people come.

This process began and kind of began to engage our laity and, as a result of that, they began to feel ownership in this product. And so what we've done since this project started in September is we've selected 9 congregations. Let me just give you a brief up-date and then I'll draw some conclusions.

Several of the pilots have selected *Kabbalat Shabbat and Maariv*. It's a natural, though some of the congregations have targeted different groups -- empty nesters, for one -- a young adults under 35 for another. One congregation has determined to work on the *shiva minyan* and I think this is absolutely fabulous because the congregation realized that, in order to provide a service of comfort to a mourner, the service could vary musically and liturgically, based upon the religious connection of that family. A family that doesn't read Hebrew, a family that hardly ever comes to *shul* might require a different type of service to provide them with comfort than the normative *Maariv* service with an added Psalm.

One congregation selected *Shabbat* Morning and two of our congregations selected the actual daily *Maariv* service, where our Hazzanim are writing music and trying to figure out ways that they could use new music and use *Maariv* as a way to build and to make daily prayer more a regular commitment in our synagogues. So that's where we are at this point. We've selected our pilots. We have 9 pilots, it turned out, that are now functioning. The first one of them will actually kind of be kicking off next Friday night, but you'll hear more about that in a few minutes.

And we anticipate over the next, hopefully by the end of the summer, all of these congregations will have created their product, have developed their marketing strategy, and they will continue to then run, under guidance of Cantorial and Men's Club guidance, for the next 8 months. So I'm really just telling you about this, you know. Hopefully, if it works, if we have anything to show, you'll invite us back next year and we can say, this is what we've learned. Just like we hope that all of these congregations will showcase their success at the Federation of Jewish Men's Club's biennial next July in Chicago, where we'll have been able to have written this up and show it to 200 to 300 congregations. And then, if we're really successful, if something really happens, we can turn this over to the movement. We could give it to the United Synagogue ... we can look at the movement and say; this is what we've learned together. How would you like to move on this? Because we really want to make sure that our children have places to *daven*. And order to do that we really need to understand that the culture of our synagogues in praying needs to be modified, needs to be tweaked in order to respond to the needs of future generations.

So that's my report to the Board. I'd like to thank you for listening and I can take questions later on.

(Applause)

Nancy Abramson and David Lefkowitz of the Park Avenue Synagogue are one of our pilots and I'd like Nancy to just say a few words.

Come on up!

Nancy Abramson

I just found out listening to Chuck that we are the first ones. We chose to work on our Friday Night Service and we are rolling it out this coming Friday night. It's not that our Friday Night Service was broken. It didn't need fixing in that regard, but we really felt it needed a new infusion of life. The people who came were a small group of people. They come fairly regularly and there was sweetness to our Friday night, but we really wanted to make it more vibrant and to reach more people.

We also have a very strong Men's Club at Park Avenue Synagogue and we felt that, with their input, we could create a vibrant, well-attended service. So what I'd like to do this morning, with David's help, is just sort of go through the chronology of how we got to this week right before the service – because I think that's an interesting process to share. It almost doesn't matter what music we're doing. What matters is that people come and fill up the room. And here's what we did to hopefully make that happen.

We began, as many interesting projects begin, in a *Star Bucks*, when David and I, in January, met with Chuck and sat around for almost 2 hours and just kind of did what Chuck said. We threw out all of our assumptions and tried to think outside of the box as to what would work for Park Avenue. And that's kind of when we decided on Friday night and on a little bit of the process of how we were doing that.

At the end of January, I contacted some of the leaders of our Men's Club to set up a meeting with a few of their members. They were involved right away because they chose who was going to attend this meeting – I didn't choose. But I let them know that the goal was to discuss Friday night services and to increase both attendance and meaning in our Friday night services. And, again, as Chuck said, they were thrilled to be contacted and to be involved.

In the middle of February, David and I met with four members of our Men's Club. They were enthusiastic about the project and had a lot of ideas on how to make our service a better one. Among these four, all of them were service attenders, but they didn't necessarily come to our Friday Night Service. Everyone left with an assignment, and that was to make a list of a few ideas that might make someone who is not a regular service attendee come and enjoy this service. So they went home with homework.

The next day after this meeting, I sent out a synopsis of the meeting to the participants and to our Rabbis and to the Synagogue chairperson. I realized that it was very important to include as many of the key players as possible and that if they were invested from the beginning, they would be willing to go along with this idea and not to just go along but to show up and to encourage others to show up.

The beginning of March these Men's Club members who had been at the previous meeting, both Rabbis and David and I, the Synagogue Chairman and Chuck met again to discuss how to bring people to the service and how it should be. We began to write some publicity for the service and one of the Men's Club guys came up with this great line, "Turn Off Your Cell Phones, Pagers, iPods and Blackberries and Come and Have a Spiritual Friday Night Service." And we tweaked that and that sort of what has been on all the publicity that we've done. It was just a three-sentence little blurb.

We also agreed at that meeting to form a larger committee to expand into a greater area of the population with Men's Clubs, empty nesters and some of the new members who were saying how can I get involved in the synagogue. And we called that a "think tank." Over the next several weeks, heads of each of these groups drew up a list of possible candidates for this "think tank" committee and then I did what Chuck told me to do (I'm very good at following directions), and I called each one of these people individually. It took

a huge amount of time because, as you all know, when you call a congregant with one goal in mind they have five other things they want to talk to you about. But no one said no. Everybody said they were willing to come and talk about services – from the new members who had never been to one of our Friday Night Services to the empty nesters who used to go when their kids were in Hebrew School but had stopped going. Everybody was glad to be contacted and it showed me what kind of power and influence we can actually have to do well in our congregations.

The beginning of April we held that meeting with the larger committee and, prior to that meeting, again with Chuck's help, we drew up a list of questions to pose to this group. I shared it with one of our Men's Club guys who were instrumental in this, and he tweaked the list of questions with me. David and I went over the questions and we sort of used that to spearhead the discussion. Some of the things that Chuck said,

"How do you want to feel when you leave this service?"

"How much singing; how much Rabbi speaking?"

"When do we announce pages?"

And the stuff all sounds elementary, but they have opinions about it. They know what makes them feel better when they're sitting there and what doesn't make them feel better. And then, as I had done with each meeting, I e-mailed the notes of the meeting to everybody and thanked them again for participating.

The middle of April we held a meeting to help people choose some of the tunes for the service. I invited the congregants who were part of the "think tank" and we also invited members from our congregational singers' group to come. And – David wasn't at that meeting – but what we did was put together a list of a couple of *L'ha Dodi* tunes and a couple of *Mizmor Shir* tunes and a couple of *Ahavah Rabah* tunes. And I sang them for people. No accompaniment, no nothing, although there will be accompaniment at the service. But, I said, just listen to these. What moves you? And they were not only able to say which tunes moved them, but sometimes why. It was really a wonderful thing.

Before that meeting I also prepared by listening to a couple of CDs that some of our colleagues have done of their Friday night services. I got the list from Abe of what his synagogue does at their Friday Night Live. I listened to David Propis' CD, I listened to the BJ CD and took some suggestions, not all of them, from what's already worked for people. We made some decisions about what to use.

The last meeting that we had was, again, with all four clergy (2 Rabbis, 2 Cantors) and the larger committee, that "think tank" committee, and we actually sat down and hammered out an outline for the service that we're going to premier this Friday night. We also made a plan to have a rehearsal Friday before the service and have invited lots of congregants to come, sing the new tunes so they can feel like they're already invested and they know what they're singing. We have also asked them to spread out in the congregation. They're all supposed to bring friends and relatives, but we don't want them all sitting together. We want them to sort of get the energy level up all around the room. And we've also planned a meeting for feedback the week after the service so that anyone who's been at the service can come and express what worked for them and what didn't, or what they'd like to see differently.

So that's where we are. Both David and I are kind of nervous in a positive way about what's going to happen on Friday night – who's gonna come, what's gonna be received. And I cannot tell you enough how much this process has been eye opening and exciting and how both Chuck and Abe have been really good at providing support and answering questions as we've going through this. And we've really modeled it on what they've told us to do.

David, did you want to say anything?

Just a couple of questions...there might be more than one...

(Audience questioner) How long from the very beginning of being inspired did it take to get to this point?

Nancy: Well I can tell you that we met, I mean I went through all my notes in preparing for what I was gonna say today, and David and I met with Chuck on January 24th and we're rolling this out on May 12th. There were probably about 8 meetings in between there.

(Abe Lubin) How many people are you anticipating, expecting or have you decided ... numbers?

Nancy: Good question. Our normal Friday Night Service, when there's nothing else going on, no birthday service or kids participating, is about 60 congregants. And we meet in our small chapel, not in the sanctuary. We are hoping to pack the chapel and have it be standing room only, which means at least doubling.

Chuck: I think that the challenge is not what happens the first Friday night. The challenge is what happens 8 weeks from now, cause this is not a once a month.... One of the discussions was, what about this once-a-month event and did we strongly discourage people from once a month because people want continuity. You get confused with once a month. You go on a *Bar Mitzvah*, you're out for the weekend and you miss another month... We didn't want the philosophy to kind of continue.

So I think they're gonna get twice as many people next Friday night and then what's going to happen is, depending upon the nature of the follow-up that they do (follow-up takes place every week – it can be done electronically, but it's got to be done). Cause there has to be tweaking on a continuous basis until you develop a kind of cultural attitude. I suspect that the week after they're going to drop by 20 people and then they're going to stay where they are, somewhere about 100 people for about 6 to 7 weeks before they get a bump. Okay? The challenge is going to be, once they get to that point of 5 or 6 weeks, how to figure out how do we get that bump. What's going to make the difference? And I think we'll figure that out as we go along.

(Riki Lippitz) You have a very rich tradition at Park Avenue. How (*something about music*), but how different should this music be from what we have done? I'm assuming that what you were doing on Friday night is accurate in any case, so what have you been doing and how different is this from what you plan?

Nancy: Our Friday night service is not like our *Shabbat* morning service, which involves professional quartet and organ. Our Friday night service has always been – I call it a sweet service. It's much more low key. This one we're actually ratcheting it up. There will be mostly all singing but the congregants that came to one of these focus groups said, we love the way our Cantors sing – we want to hear some Cantorial gems within this service, we just don't want it to be all of that. I mean, they were very frank.

We are using a keyboard and a *tof* player for this particular service, and my assumption is that people will say that they liked that or they would like to see different instruments. You know, they'll tell us what they want.

Alberto Mizrahi

Nancy, on the same topic, what surprised you? I mean you got my service; you got David's service, etc. What surprised you that that's not what they're looking for? Was there anything that you would call a *hidush* coming up, or are you being conservative about it? I mean, what, musically?

Nancy: They chose the music. I mean I used some stuff from you, from your service, some stuff from David's service. The congregants spoke. I mean, they said yeah this is a nice *L'ha Dodi*, but we've done this before. Let's use a new one. Let's use that one. They had a lot of opinions and then there were some things where they said, this is a really pretty melody but it's not so sing-able. We some something we can just jump right in on.

(Joe Gole) Does this replace the regular Friday night menu? In other words, you have your regular Friday night menu....

Nancy: No, this is our new regular Friday night service and, again with the Committee, we figured out ways to incorporate and *Bar* and *Bat Mitzvah* in participating in this. We haven't quite figured out what to do when there's special Hebrew school participation. That we still...

(Joe Gole) The alter yid that goes to *shul* every Friday night, they're buying into this notion?

Nancy: Yes, and some of them sat on this committee.

(Sara Geller): So, you chose all of the new melodies with the congregation. So you had other melody values that you were doing before. And, if you're gonna implement this as your regular Friday night service from now on, are you going to alternate some of the older melodies that you had been singing, or is it gonna be these are the specific melodies that they chose when you had a couple that they chose from, and they picked this L'hā Dodi? Are you going to have a range or it will be exactly this service with these tunes every single week?

Nancy: Just to clarify, we didn't throw out everything. As I said at the beginning, our service was not broken. It just needs umph! So we kept some of the melodies and they chose which ones they wanted to keep from the things we already do. In some of my notes I wrote, for this service we're doing (for instance *Laufer* L'hā Dodi), but people like 'bla-bla-bla' so save that for another time.

My guess is that at least four times in a row we will do the same thing. It's sort of like when your mom said, you know, try this vegetable at least four times and if you still don't like it after the fourth time then you don't have to eat it anymore. That's kind of what our approach is with these tunes. So no, it's not set in stone.

When David Propis sent me his outline from one of his Friday Night Services, it had a specific date on it. This is what they did that specific night, so I'm assuming that they do other things other times and that's what we will do probably as well.

Anybody else? David Lefkowitz?

Well we have a few more presenters; so David do you want to just tie it up?

David Lefkowitz

I just want to add one point here, that to demonstrate the important, powerful aspect of this. Typically when you go about trying to do something new or trying to come up with a plan, you work very hard at it. You may work with a committee or a few other people. Rarely do you even have the Rabbi involved. In this case, we not only had all the clergy involved, we had people from the Board of Trustees, as well as Nancy had said, regular congregants of different age groups, as well as people who didn't come that often.

The point being really, here, that in the planning we had the comfort level to really let go and not to be taking, asserting the power of whose in charge and what has to be. We completely let that go. You have a trust factor, so the result is that, if you do it the old way you could come to your occasion and people are coming in – you do all your PR work – and they come in and, then, what are they doing? They're judging. That's an important distinction because the problem, then, is that people aren't really part of it. They're sitting back and saying well I like this and I like this, but I don't really like this. And then you have a bunch of disagreement and it's not really what you're aiming for.

The power here is that, because (as Nancy said) the people themselves are empowered and they're the ones that, working together – and it was an amazing experience. We would just sit in and the professionals would look around and say, well this is really interesting because when people feel involved in it, they

really give of themselves. And nobody then cares about how his or her opinion was. Once there becomes this kind of give and take and people start to feel what seems right, then everybody is on the same wavelength with it. And then the important result is that when you come to it, there are no consequences. It doesn't really matter that this was great because we'll have a meeting two days afterwards and, as a group, we'll decide okay, where do we go from here? And nobody feels to blame; nobody feels that they're the victor or the loser. And that's a really important move forward.

Chuck: Thank you, David.

Chuck

If you'll hold the questions for just a second because I'm looking at our time line... I just want to acknowledge some of the other pilots that are offering right now. Jack *Chomsky* has a pilot; Earl *Berris* has a pilot; *Elias Rosemberg* in Boston; Eric *Wasser* in New Jersey. David *Tilman* is taking a *Shabbat* morning in Philadelphia, and Sheldon Levin, who I'd like to see come up and share a little bit of what he's doing right now, and Steve Stoehr who's been working on the *Shiva Minyan* program as well, which we'll develop into a course. And following that I guess we'll have time for a few more questions but Alberto is going to make his presentation.

Alberto:

Thanks Chuck. At my *shul* we chose – first of all you should know that we don't use instrumental music on *Shabbat* or *Hagim*, so we've been looking for ways of getting that kind of energy that sometimes instruments can add to a service. I do a Friday Live service several times a year when we can do it before it gets dark. We use the instruments *Kabbalat Shabbat* and then put the instruments away and do *Maariv* and that way no ones gotten angry that we're violating *Shabbat* or totally changing the whole tenor of the congregation. And I get so much positive feedback – people want more instruments. So we keep adding more of those and we're doing them now also this summer. Our Men's Club is wonderful. We have a great Men's Club at our *shul*. They're going to run bar-b-cue dinners with these summer Friday Night things and we may do them outdoors, weather permitting.

But then, to add more instrument opportunities, we've now added Saturday Nights a couple of times a year. We start with *Havdalah* with no instruments and then immediately after *Havdalah* we bring out the instruments – and I've got great people in my congregation who are very talented musicians. They're all amateurs but they play very nicely. They read from music and so we write out parts for everybody and on Saturday Night it's basically a sing-along kind of thing, with Israeli songs or, if there's a holiday coming up, we use some holiday melodies. And we often include a Saturday Night dinner with it and we get kids out. We get huge turn outs at all of these things.

So we looked at our services and we said, when else could we use instruments? We don't do a *Maariv* weekday service. We have a weekday morning service that our chapel is filled to capacity. There is not a seat to be had every morning. But we don't do a weekday evening.

So we decided (and it's really our Men's Club that pushed this) that on Tuesday nights we're gonna try doing a weekday evening service with instruments at 7:30, because, at 8 o'clock, we have our ritual meetings, our Board meetings, our Executive meetings our Finance meetings (they're all Tuesday nights at 8 o'clock). And also on Tuesday night our Hebrew High meets. So the goal will be to use instruments to hopefully have the Hebrew High kids sing the choir parts.

The Committee hasn't yet decided for sure what music we're going to use. I just got a *Charles Davidson* service that was premiered here at a convention; I think the one in Detroit, which included kids singing and instruments. I got *Gerald Cohen's* service that was premiered to the Cantor's Convention in 2001. Both of those services are written with instrumental parts and with opportunities for lots of congregational singing and opportunity for some sort of choir or kids to sing.

We may also offer the Committee some other options, Wohlberg tunes or *Carlbach* tunes – maybe tunes that they know already rather than everything being something that they don't know. And then, hopefully, this is something that will take a life of its own. What you heard before is exactly what we're doing. We're going through the process, we're involving people, we're trying to get lots of peoples' input. And then, hopefully, it something that will have an energy, that will keep growing and moving on its own.

Jack Chomsky

Well in Columbus Ohio I think we may be the last ones in. Have you gotten anybody since us? (*Background response – “We have some...”*)

Chuck

Ok! So I know I'm going to be calling Sheldon because he had all those great resources as he so often does. We don't really know what we're doing with the service yet. What we decided in our initial meeting is that, more than any particular service, we've identified a segment of the congregation that we don't see in the times and places that we would like to see. These are our under 40, our under 35 members, who are nice people and I see them around at a lot of things in town but they have not found their way into regular synagogue attendance. And if they don't that could be problematic.

I think that the most exciting thing – at least at the outset – is the opportunity to have an honest conversation, to listen to what people think. Many of our congregants are not very sophisticated in terms of their *davening* skills or their understanding of what's involved in *davening*, but they are very well educated, sophisticated people. And this provides a really good opportunity to sit down and listen to them, as has been described -- to put before them some of the issues of designing and shaping a service, and without it being a gripe session. An opportunity to see, you know, what are the things that would be of interest to them and how can we use the resources that we have available to shape something that will engage them. So I hope, as you said, you know, next year there'll be a lot more to report. And, hopefully, all of us can report about the many people who have been more deeply engaged in the activities of our congregation (and in active Jewish religious lives) because of these conversations that came to us courtesy of the vision of the Men's Clubs. Of Chuck Simon, who really has been the source of a number of great visions in our movement. And Chuck really thinks 'outside the box'. I mean, he's got this kind of a yellowish jacket and orange shirt and a pink tie. The guy is really out there! And Chuck and I go way back. So that's my report.

You all know our President.

Steve Stoehr

I just think anybody who wears a loud colored shirt like that is. (*Laughter*)

Our community is involved in something quite different. We're responsible for coordinating the portion of this initiative regarding *Shiva Minyanim* and we see this opportunity through the Cantor's Assembly and the Federation of Jewish Men's Clubs in a wonderful partnership. And, so, while the *Hazzanim* are taking the primary role in many of these new initiatives of Friday Night Lives and One *Shabbat* Mornings and those sorts of exuberant types of musical possible exploratory services, we obviously have a more limited atmosphere in which to work – a more limited venue.

But much like the United Synagogue has the *Immun* Program and the Women's League has the *Kolot Bik'dushah* types of certification, we would like to coordinate this effort between us and the Federation of training people to become certified *Shiva Minyan* leaders. And my congregation is given the task to try to coordinate some of these efforts.

My congregation also has a *Hevrah Kadishah*, which also makes us a little bit unique. Some of your congregations I'm sure may also. I know I'm working with a couple of friends in the Assembly in trying to coordinate their synagogues to create *Hevrah Kadishah*, so my congregation is very sensitive to that

element of life, as I'm sure yours are. But we have a specific drive to educate and to reach out to our congregants who have suffered loss, by actually having members of our congregation be on the *Hevrah Kadishah*. And this is simply an extension thereof for those people who can't quite come to bring themselves to being in the room with those of us who do it. Some people can be *shomrim* and, if not, some people can lead a *Shiva Minyan*. It's a wonderful *mitzvah* and that's the partnership that we're trying to do.

When Chuck approached most of us – I'm gonna use a word from the 90's – the idea was Empowerment

Right, how do we get this *minyan* – not *yan* per se – but how do we get this throng of excited Men's Club people, gentlemen, who go to their retreats. They have these *ruah* davenings, they learn, they're educated, they find out what *T'filot* means (*singing chant*) ... and then they come back home to *shul* and they're not included and they're not infused into the service, and they're not utilized. How can we keep that sense of their excitement going on in the congregation? And, so, at least that's what I thought our initiative was based on. How do we get this large group of men to become infused into what's going on in the synagogue?

So the way we're trying to do this, once again, as Women's League does, as United Synagogue does, is we're trying to train lay leaders. We're trying to sensitize people to the needs of a *Shiva Minyan*. I don't know about your communities, but in my community sometimes you go to a *Shiva Minyan* and you know you walk in and people are serving wine and it almost becomes a party – it almost becomes a wake. It's hard enough to get people to separate themselves into a quiet room for the *minyan* because everybody else is making noise in all the other rooms of the house. So what we're trying to train our lay leaders to do is how to come in, how to take control of the atmosphere, how to meet with the family prior to the *minyan*. If there are small children that are part of the mourning process, how to speak to them. How to make the service accessible to people who are not *Hebraicly* literate, to people who never come to *shul* that we've heard about in other communities other than mine. How do you get these people who don't know how to *daven*, who don't know how to open a *Siddur* to make a *Shiva Minyan* meaningful to them? Ashre Yeshve Veteḥa and they're sitting there going, "eh eh." OK, it's time for *Yitgadal V'yitkadash* and they're trying to follow along the transliteration.

A -- two parts to the process. How do we make a *Shiva Minyan* more accessible, meaningful, cathartic, healing for the mourner? B, how do we get and empower the Men's Club people (and other in the community, but specifically that's who we're working on this initiative with) – how do we educate them to become para-chaplains, if you will, extensions of the clergy? And I'm just as comfortable sending my friend Mike to run the *minyan* as I might be going as the *Hazzan* to lead the *minyan*. How do we educate them, empower them and create an atmosphere in a *shiva minyan*, which is, probably, the most sensitive of the venues in which we lead a *minyan*?

So we're talking about physical proximity. How do you set up the room? Do you face them or do you face away from them? I've led *minyan* where we've got Mom and the Daughter sitting in the front but the Uncle and the Brother are sitting in the back. Should you bring all the mourners towards the front so that they feel like they're together, that they have a sense of commonality and comfort? The use of silence, the use of meditation, the use of song and *nigun*, the use of poetry, teaching materials for the children – all sorts of things. Do you light candles? Don't you light candles? So we're trying to work on the atmosphere, the room; we're working on the liturgy, the *minyan*; we're working on making it comforting for the mourner and empowering and educating the *Shiva Minyan* leader. And that's the process we're going through presently.

(Applause)

You have a question for Steve?

Steven, there's a couple questions for you. We'll take two questions because I don't want to get out late, ok?

(David Feuer): Rather than a question, I have a statement. I am fascinated for the study that you are doing. You are in the time of investigating something that many of us, at least me, I am doing this kind of work for more than 40 years, starting in my country (Argentina). Here in my congregation, 20 years that I prove that the material that I am doing with them works. We are talking just pure music. Not organization of the service, but singing of *Kabbalat Shabbat*, *Shabbat Morning*. My congregation is a singing congregation and I think that I can help to anybody here to put these together.

(Alberto Mizrahi): David, that's going to be part of my presentation, is asking for your help.

(David Feuer): OK, I'm here.

I know, and may of us know, that you and others here and around that aren't in this room, have been active in this kind of activity for many, many years. You also came from a culture that had started developing this in Argentina long before we started thinking about it here. But I appreciate what you have to say and I thank you for your help. We need it.

Who else? Sara has had her hand up for a long time.

(Audience member – Sara): I was just wondering if, as part of this process, you're also going to be coming up with a new *minyan* booklet that we can use, because that's one of the problems that I often have, that the *minyan* booklets aren't accessible.

(Mizrahi)

That's also part of my presentation. I think we'll stop the questions. Is that to me or to the general...?

(Stoehr)

We probably will come up with some text. Primarily we use the *Minyan of Comfort* books, those green books that I find to be very nice and have lovely alternatives. But when it comes to musical options or *nigunim* or other meditations or children's materials, we do hope to come up with a compendium.

(Mizrahi)

We're going to take more questions at the end. Let me just – I had a kind of a long (but it's going to be very short now because I love everything that's been said). As Chuck said to me, "Who knew we had so much substance?"

(Laughter)

And it's true. I mean we started this, not on a whim. We're in the 21st Century and I've been preaching this in the Officer Corps and I'm preaching to the choir *enohi nami*. There's nothing to preach. All of you are here because you're thirsting for the ability to be more meaningful to your congregation, to your profession, to your calling, to yourselves. And here are a couple of things that have come to my mind.

It took me many years to allow myself to think that I needed to change in any way. I mean, I'm a *Hazzan*, why do I have to do this 'yaba-yaba-yaba' stuff. It was, you know.... And that's not too long ago, you know. David's been doing popular, contemporary music for many, many years. That was not the case with me.

I was doing old Eastern European congregational melodies, tried and true *hazzanut*, not constantly like in an orthodox synagogue, you know, when you have a concert *shabbos*, but enough of it that, you know, I would get bored. And it took me a long, long time. And then, all of a sudden, it dawned on my that, you know, I think maybe it was the year 2000, you know, when the century changed, and I went "Oh God, where the Hell are we with this thing?" We're so far from our roots (Cantorial roots in Eastern Europe) – our musical roots are way before that. But we're so far from these Cantorial roots and we've lost our audience. They're not there. They're gone, or most of them are gone. And their children, some of them remember it, but many don't. Their children are the she'eno yodeah lishol – certainly at least the *tam*. So what are we going to do about it?

Some of us are very lucky. We have congregations that have full *minyanim* in the morning that have lots of people on Friday night. With Sheldon, I'm thrilled to hear it. Demographics play a very, very important part in what we're trying to do. Demographically speaking, I live in an urban area right in the middle of the city of Chicago. As you know, in the middle of urban areas, when you're not in suburban or even somewhat suburban areas, when you're right in the middle of a city (New York, Chicago, Los Angeles) people are running around. They're got ... there's a vibe that tells people you've got too many other things to do to go to *shul*. Now that happens in suburbia also, of course. But I find that to be one of my greatest challenges. What is it that's going to attract these people to the congregation? What is it? Can I get them there every week? Am I giving up by doing a once a month *Anshe Emet Live* as opposed to every week, or do we do it every week or every other week?

Well, the Rabbi and I spoke about this. I will tell you that we have not created the focus group that should have been created. That has a lot to do with the personality of a congregation, which usually stems from the top. Some people are just control freaks and they don't want to give up that control. It's very, very difficult. But we have had many, many frank talks and my Rabbi is not an impossible person. He's a youngish guy and when you sit with him and talk, he'll say "yeah, yeah, yeah." But, you know, three days later he forgot the conversation happened. So it's something I have to keep working at. But the one thing we're all on line about is that we need portals to *davening*. Opening portals – it's like a time port like those shows. The time port is the space you walk through and you're going through a space continuum and you're in some other reality. We need these portals for people who just – going to synagogue is as foreign as flying to Mars.

What's going to attract these people? Youngish people -- people who are so busy – not with young families. Young families you can grab in a second. Have a dinner. Boom! Do a kiddie service with guitars for 20, 30, 40 minutes. Boom! They're there. Got hundreds of them -- hundreds. And we do that in my synagogue. That doesn't mean all your synagogues, cause demographically you may not have that many single parents or young families as we do. We have a huge amount of that in the city. Then they move out, they go to school somewhere else – although that's not happening any more in Chicago.

So how do you create portals to *davening*? One of my great challenges and something that I've spoken with all the Officers about – and I'm sure they'll agree with me – is how do you create this change without throwing away tradition? What is the balance of tradition and change? How do we ... can we remain authentic *Hazzanim*? How do I tell the kids in the school that I'm coaching at the Seminary, *Baruch Hashem*, you know? I'm very proud and very happy doing it. It's a *tirche* believe me, but I get so much out of it because there's very, very terrific talent there. But how do I tell them that they have to learn *Hazzanic recitatives* with authenticity and Cantorial moves and all that, so that they can sound like an authentic *Hazzan*? What is an authentic *Hazzan*? Maybe Rabbi Joe Black is an authentic *Hazzan* today. I don't know. Maybe *Taubman* is the authenticity today. I don't think so. I think that they all have a place, a tremendous place. They are innovators; they open eyes; they open ears. But we're *Hazzanim*; we do have a calling; we have thousands of years of history. How is it that we don't give it up?

How do we meld this *munous* into a seamless tapestry of the magnificent and the modern, the contemporary – which can also be magnificent? Because if you've got 200 people singing b'kol ram, that's magnificent. There's nothing wrong with that. And, as my friend *Ben Tziyon Miller* said to me, "Ah, you're waking up. The *Hasidim* have been doing it for 400 years." (*Laughter*) And they have! They were on to something. They're not stupid, the *Hasidim*. How do you think there's so many of them? Of course they have 20 babies each, but that's something else. (*laughter*)

How many in this room have what they would consider a synaplex? Who's the cantor of a synaplex? It's not a lot. Gees! Who hasn't ever heard of a synaplex? You all have heard of it, but you don't do it! OK. So you come to my *shul* on any given *Shabbos*. Maybe you have it and you don't know you have it, but, I mean, when you have like every first, third and fifth *Shabbos*, you have a *tot shabbat*, a *shahar*, a *mahar*, you know, different age groups. Then you have an on-going library – as we call it, the Rose Crown Room *Minyan* – which is an egalitarian traditional *Minyan*, where they *daven* everything, cause we cut things in our *shul*. But in that *Minyan* they cut nothing – full *P'suke D'zimrah*, full reading, full everything -- *Daven*,

by the people themselves. I find it so boring. Not because of the length, because the leading people aren't trained people, and – although I've helped them – but they don't come for a lot of help. You have to sort of force yourself and that's schism is a very difficult one. But we don't... We always send a Rabbi. We have three of them, thank God; they're not all on the *Bema*. So we send one of them there and he, you know, they talk – they might give it five minutes to ten minutes speech, sermon, whatever. But they are there as a Rabbinical presence, but it's run by the people themselves.

You have the main sanctuary service. We have a class, a *Talmud* class that's taught by a layperson that used to start in ...

(Musical interruption)

Thank God for iPods, you know. You press a button and ba-boom! It's right there. Anyway – it's my salvo. We have this *Talmud* class that's taught by a layperson that used to start an hour before the main *Shaharis* but nobody came because it was too early. They used to come – used to have a little group. So now they start the same time as *Shaharit*, so there goes *Shaharit*. You know we have very few people at *Shaharit* and then they walk in towards the middle or sometimes the end of the *Torah* reading because they're so excited by their learning. And it's an exciting time. And they have 20 people that go every *Shabbos* morning. And, by the way, numbers are relative. In Joe's congregation you have 700 Iranians every *Shabbos* morning. And how many non-Iranians? *(Laughter)* I mean, the point is, that everybody has a different demographic so there's a plus and a minus to every situation, to every single situation.

I'm a *Hazzan* of a synaplex. We are running so many services and programs at any given time it makes your head spin. What is your role in all of this? What is mine? Mine is to get away as often as possible and to sing concerts. *(Much laughter)* But, honesty – not always the best policy! Ok!

Stoehr is developing a *Shiva Minyan* to make it feel spiritual and real to the people who come. And I have always felt, and still to this day feel, -- well, first of all, I'm very excited about what he's gonna come up with and what the congregation is gonna develop, because I'm gonna steal it immediately. But I want to see what they come up with because I see that, even when people have no idea how to *daven*, that if you come in and do an authentic, beautiful, b'lachash but with voice, with feeling, with tenderness do a couple of poetic readings – not the usual crap. You know, terrible translations of things – but you use the Morris Adler readings or a couple of things that truly touch the heart, that are short, to the point, that make a gift of memory – that kind of things. I find that if you do a traditional, people may not know what you're doing but that's true of 90% of the people who come to your *shul* most of the time. But they do go away feeling like this is what we needed, because at times of death, birth, and wedding, and those kinds of *Simchas* or *S'mahot* or the opposite, people are looking for the old time religion. Not the old time religion of the guy Ashre Yeshve Veseha (with an Eastern European accent), you know. I'm talking in today's world. So, you know, that's a schism but it's a good one. It's wonderful. I want to take what he does and then put it in my traditional *davening* and see what I can learn from it. That's all really we're here to do.

My whole thing is that I've re-tooled and I've worked very hard at it, and I'm nowhere near where I should be. Now Nancy and David have done a miraculous thing. They've actually gone through the process. That's a hard thing. Those meetings, you know, I don't care how exciting they are – they're meetings. They are evenings out of your life so you're not going to tell me that's the easiest thing. That's hard work. It's very hard work. It's hard to get them at the beginning and to keep them and to be innovative enough and excited enough that they, you know – but it pays off. It's a big pay off. It's my – it's a presumption and I'm in a panic mode, I'm in a slightly panic mode for my colleagues and my profession. I'm in a panic mode and I think most of you should be.

We've talked about this. Steve has given us brilliant dissertations on this. My panic is that we're going to forget how to be authentic *Hazzanim* – not necessarily the people in this room, but some of the younger people – because they won't have anybody to listen to. And if you can't listen to an authentic *Hazzan*, you don't know what it is. We all learn by listening. That's how everybody learned over the years – it's an oral tradition. *Hazzanut* as is Middle-Eastern music, which *Hazzanut* is an offshoot of, right. What are we going to do with it now that we're in the year 2006? I mean, we're very blasé about the fact that we're at the

beginning of a new century. Big deal; there'll be another century...but not for us, you know. I won't be here to see that. I'm not Chinese, you know. The last millennium was not the Chinese millennium – this millennium will be China's millennium. They have time; they have time. (*Laughter*) They have billions of people. They'll come; they'll do; they'll take over the world. They have time. They'll wait another thousand years.

What are we gonna do in our lifetime to insure that what we do remains authentic and traditional, as much as tradition means to each and every one of you in their own way. And yet, retool for this century and do it immediately. That's how this came about. My Rabbi and I spoke about this about six years ago and I said, you know, I don't know how to do this. I've never heard a service. Everybody kept saying, "Oh BJ, it's the answer." (*Laughter*) OK. OK. I want to hear this – I mean, I have to hear this. No! That was not my first reaction. I have to be honest. My first reaction was, "Ah, bull shit! Come on! BJ, Schmee-J! It's another fad!" And then – Sinai! OH! They do this Friday Night Live. *Taubman*! OH! Ah! It's the answer! You know what? It is an answer. And BJ is an answer. And Propis is an answer. And now I have an answer. And everybody has an answer. Nancy is going to have an answer. I want each and every one of you to have an answer. If you're not one of the pilot congregations, I want you to come up and say, "Why aren't I one of the pilots?" Well, for whatever reason, we chose demographically so that we had different kinds – to see what works where, because every part of the country is different. Right!

I want you to buy in to the fact that if you start making your service feel more contemporary, feel like an American service, with tradition, that you're going to build your position. You're going to strengthen your position, you'll build yourself up in the eyes of the congregation and your Rabbi and your Board – and they'll say this *Hazzan's* trying to do something. He's trying to help us. And the numbers game is big, yeah. I'd love to have 1000 people in *shul*, I really would. I dream about retiring and going to that golden *shul* in the sky somewhere. Where they have 1000 old people who don't care about the new stuff and just want to hear *Hazzanus*. So I can scream my way to death, you know. (*Laughter*) It's true. But, you know, I sit there in Chicago and say, "You idiot. You are so lucky. You've got this major place in a big city (which I love) and they let you do anything you want. What are you going to do with that? Are you gonna sit there and *daven* and *daven* and *daven*?"

Yeah, sometimes I will, because a Birkas Hahodesh comes up and I feel like *davening*. I give them a big Birkas Hahodesh. And you know what I get at the end of the service – "Wow that was some Brat Hahodesh. I feel great! But in between I've sung *Taubman*, *Finklestein*, *Carlbach*, you know – and I don't know enough of these tunes. In fact, that's one of the things I'm gonna send out an *Hazzanet* note that, as we develop these things...

The original idea was, maybe I'll talk to 4 or 5 composers of contemporary music and ask them to write some new stuff -- to give me stuff. Debbie Freedman and I had a meeting. She gave me some of her things – which are beautiful – cause I said, "I don't know your music." I mean, other people know everything she wrote. I don't know *her* music. But I said, "What can I use in a conservative service that doesn't change everything?" And she had a few things. I love what *Taubman* does. He takes very simple lines and repeats them and makes them – he has a genius for simple, melodic lines that's (most of the time) 100% sing-able.

So what I want to do now with the little time we have left is look at something that we've done at Anshe Emet and now, by the way, our project is to revamp our Hahnasat Hatorah through the *Musaf*. And that's not the Rabbi saying to me, "I don't like your *Musaf*." It's, I know that there's a little wink in the eye of some of the congregants who say, "I loved your *davening*." But a couple of others said, "*Hazzan*, Oy, such a long service today." It wasn't me really, honestly. I don't do long services. My *Musaf* is at most 20 minutes. I mean, if it's 30 minutes, it's because there's a choir doing two pieces and that kind of thing. We have a choral service once a month.

We're going to do now a *Shabbat* Morning Live. And how are we going to do it? It can't be the same as my *Anshe Emet* Live, the Friday Night service. The Friday Night service has taken on its own life and I'll show you what it is and talk to you about it. The *Shabbos* Morning has to be a little bit; to me anyway, more on the traditional side and also the Rabbi refuses to change the order of the service. So if you can't

change a 2 ½ to 3-hour service, it'll never be popular enough to grab hundreds and hundreds of people. If you can make a 1 ½ to 2-hour service you have a chance. You have a chance.

Look at the sheet I gave you of *Anshe Emet* Live – the menus, the programs. So I was going to play you the tape. We just came out with a CD of this, but let's just all sing it a little bit. You know L'hu N'ran'noh here's the order. We, oh by the way, Chuck and I do not disagree because, every time he says something, it bears great *gravitas*.

We ran out. I only made 50 because I didn't expect anybody to be here. Listen; listen for a second. When Chuck says something I may not immediately agree, but I know that it's coming from thought. And I'm saying, you know, maybe he's right – or, you know, he's probably right. But, in my congregation, to do this service every week it would "lose it's flavor on the bedpost overnight", because it's a very radical service. We didn't keep the old service and incorporate new stuff into it, as Nancy is doing and David, and I have a feeling that it might work very well on a weekly basis, just like *B'nai Jeshurun's* service works on a weekly basis. And they change their music all the time, by the way. They have different tunes that they use on a rotating basis, use a lot of *s'fardic* melody, a lot of the stuff that in Argentina they call "Argentinean music" – *s'fardic* melody, you know.

I didn't want to do *Taubman* service either, because he is great and he does this rock thing – (*Shouts loudly, "Get your hands up!"*). You know, I can't do it – I can't do it. It's not me. I'm a *Hazzan*. So he can do it great and I bring him in once in a while just to – and, you know, the last time I brought him in – this is really bragging. I had a lot of people come up and say to me, "We don't need him here. We have a great service." -- because they like a service. So, we start with *Carlbach*.

(Singing L'hu N'ran'nah Ladoshem)

I have a 7-piece, sometimes 6-piece jazz band that plays with me. Some of the best players in Chicago, and part of the reason we can't do it more than once a month is it costs me over \$1800 for this thing every Friday night. So.

(Audience interruption – then laughter)

What the hell was I saying? (*Audience responses*) Thank you. It costs me 1800 bucks so the answer is, use people in your congregation that play well and will give you their time. Rare! It will happen, you'll find them, but it's hard and, for me, I went the easy way. I have a professional choir, I have a professional band – it's just the only way I can work because I have 4 minutes before the service to go over the music with these guys cause I'm not around. So!

(Singing L'hu N'ran'nah.....Nariah Lo – up tempo)

You'll get clapping, you get singing. We at the beginning were thinking of demographically aiming this for the 20's and 30's. People in their 20's and 30's.

(Aside: 10 minutes – no problem. I knew I'd talk too much.)

People in their 20's and 30's. What happened with the service? The first time we co-sponsored it with a United Federation Young Adult Division and they sent out e-mails to their entire mailing list. We had ads going out. We got about 500 people and 300 to 400 of them were young. And we said, "we've succeeded. We did it. That's it. Here it is. Boom!" That was 5 years ago. The next service was a month later and we had 300 people and we started feeling, "Uh Oh!" But that's not what happens.

At first they're curious. Sometimes it might work the other way where you start with a core group and it builds. We started with this huge thing, because of publicity and there was a lot of buzz in Chicago about it. Chicago is not as big as New York – eh, it's pretty big! Anyway, "Second City syndrome!" And they came in big numbers. The next time it went down to 300 and now we consistently have 300 to 400 people,

sometimes 500 – I've never had less than 300 people. In a *shul* we get 25 people on a Friday night. OK. What are they seeing in the service?

(Audience member's cell phone rings)

What they're getting out of this service is an ability to let go – to feel like they've *davened* even though they can clap, they can dance, they can – we do all the things that everybody does, but they also get a chance to *daven* a silent *amidah*. They also get – as opposed to these other things – I mean *B'nai Jeshurun* I think has all of that. But it's a very different service. I like it but I can't carry it out – I can't carry it off. This I can carry off because *Carlbach* is good to me. *Taubman*, the tunes we use – the *Finklestein* tunes are very usable. And some people think his *Mi Hamo'ha* is too hard originally, but when you sing it 3 or 4 months in a row.... My people are singing it like crazy. It's like it was mother's milk. You can teach a congregation anything if you repeat it long enough and often enough.

So, look at the service. *L'hu N'ran'nah* right? *(Singing in Hebrew)* And then, when that's over, everybody's clapped themselves out, the little kids (now I have a group of 7 or 8 nine, eight, seven, six years old) that sit right in the front and dance. I don't ask them to do it; they just love it. They dance. And their parents are going, "Oh my kid is dancing in *shul*!" And then we go right into *Yism'hu Hashamayim* *(singing in Hebrew)*. Why, because it's such a great tune? No, because the entire world knows it. So you make people feel comfortable and they sing something they know, and the kids are dancing. *Shiru Ladoshem* *(Singing in Hebrew)*. So that is my yaba, yaba, yaba – the trio of pieces, a medley. The "yaba" medley, ok! We do the *Carlbach*, the *Sirotkin*, the *Carlbach*, and it's, you know. *Ganchoff* used to say, "When you've got em, once you get to the climatic part of the piece, don't let them go. Stay climaxing for a while." It's the same thing with this. Once you get into that kind of a *Carlbach* rhythm kind of thing, don't let it go for a while. Let them feel like they're "Wow, Wow! It's not going to end. I'm tired. Leave me alone." And then it stops. *(Laughter)*

Then we do *Mizmor l'David*. Now I put Spanish Portuguese on the January 20th *Havu Ladoshem B'nai Elim* *(singing in Hebrew)*. Nice with guitar, little *tof*, you know. But other times we do the *Carlbach*, which is, to me, is gorgeous. *(Audience questioner speaks.)*

Mizrahi responds – No, there are no English readings whatever in this service. But, as a trade off, there's also very little *davening*, sometimes none between some of the pieces. So the Psalms, which many congregations often skip many of the Psalms, you know – so instead of skipping the, we do beginnings, we do endings, and then when we get to the *Maariv*, that's more or less *davened completely*, except we don't take a Hell of a lot of time. So if you traditional and you want to *daven*, you can *daven* while I'm singing the next thing – but I did give you a few seconds to *daven*. Because continuity and not letting go of the moment is very, very important. Especially when you can use instruments and – there's a whole....

By the way, the instruments versus the non-instruments – how many of you here if you wanted to could use instruments in your synagogue service on *Shabbos*? That's not even – well it's about half. OK. Those of you that cannot, this will not succeed as well. I'm telling you right away. Which means don't expect 300-400 people in your services. But, if you create your focus groups and you teach them and you have rehearsals, and you buy in just like Nancy had them tell you what they want, you know, help them help you – you will get double the amount you have now. Isn't that something? Isn't that ... yes sir *(Recognizing audience questioner)* *(Speaker could not hear question until repeated)?*

That is your answer and I'm sure it's a valid one and it works. In my congregation, when 99.9% of the people that come cannot *daven*, do not know how to *daven*, and are there for an experience – a spiritual *davening* experience – and they don't know what that is, I provide it for them. Therefore, they are not missing the *davening*.

Yes sir. *(Recognizing audience member)*

This is sort of a general question, observation at my shul, which ties in to what.... One of the things said before – I think Nancy said it – that this up and down flow of once a month and then every week is

something different. It's an issue we're kind of struggling with right now because, what's happened is, we have a Carlbach service once a month. Right! And, that goes through all those melodies. And then we have a Friday Night Live once and two other times we have something that we've developed over the years which is more just davening and that's the thing that the B'nai Mitzvah lead. But one of the things is we have all these different components – we have people who know how to daven. We have people who come and love the Friday Night Live, but the davening people don't really like it. They prefer Carlbach because they.... See, so I have all these constituencies and I'm thinking, our clergy are thinking, well maybe we need to have one Adath service that goes every week because it's more consistent – but at the same time.... It's confusing for people, as well.

If I could suggest, you have to think about blending here. Not just one service, because you have different portals and different entry levels. But at the same time it sounds to me like, if you have different services once a month, what you're doing is you're having events. It's poor programming. Events don't build upon something else. It's like theatre. It's like television. You have your favorite show you like to watch once a week. And if it's bad, well after a while you stop going. People don't like to go to bad theatre. People like to have a certain kind of expectations and you're just denying the larger the congregation those expectations by limiting it to once a month. You have to have a broader vision of where that's going.

Recording was cut off at this point.

**"Tribute to the Music & Personality
of Hazzan Max Wohlberg"
Monday May 8, 2006 4:00 p.m.
Presenters: Hazzanim Kenneth Cohen,
Perry Fine, David Lefkowitz
Erica Lippitz, Lorna Wallach-Kalet
& William Lieberman, Chair**

Welcome to this wonderful next session – a tribute to Hazzan Max Wohlberg. *Alav Hashalom*. In presenting the program and helping us through the rest of the afternoon, Hazzan William Lieberman

(Applause)

Hazzan William Lieberman -- Thank you, Steve?

The biographical entry in the Cantors Assembly's 50th year, "Jubilee Journal" describes Max Wohlberg as educator, scholar, composer, Hazzan, and formidable champion of nusach ha-tefillah. Hazzan Max Wohlberg rose from his student days in a Sztatmar yeshivah to become one of the most prominent voices in the world of Jewish music. His favorite haunts were the library of the Jewish Theological Seminary, the New York Public Library, and the New York City Music Library. His linguistic abilities stood him in good stead, as he read books and articles written in English, Hebrew, Yiddish, German and Hungarian. The recipient of many honors, in 1987 Professor Wohlberg became occupant of the first endowed chair at the Cantor's Institute – the Nathan Cummings Chair of Hazzanut and Liturgy. Upon his passing on April 19, 1996, his funeral service was held at the Seminary in New York, as befitted a great scholar and luminary in Jewish life.

"Asay l'kha rav"– these words from Pirkei Avot ring as true as ever before, as we mark the tenth yahrtzeit and beginning of the Centennial year of Max Wohlberg. To say the least, it is a daunting, as well as humbling task – to try and convey the essence of an individual's life and music in the space of one hour. However, the feelings and thoughts that bring the seven presenters before you this afternoon is a sincere love and respect for a beloved teacher. Asay l'kha rav – find for yourself a master- teacher... How true, when we pause to remember those who guided us along life's paths and journeys, and whose teachings are with us every day of our lives.

It is my pleasure to continue the program by asking Erica Lippitz to introduce her segment.

Erica Lippitz

I'd like to give credit -- source of everything that I will be presenting is here in a marvelous book written by Charles Davidson, "From *Zatmar* to the New World, Max Wohlberg American Cantor." It's published by JTS. It is an extraordinary, concise, entertaining biography and much of what I will read to you today will come from this book. Which, by the way, does not only speak about Max but speaks really about the time and context in which he lived and worked. So, meet *Miklosh Wohlberg*. *Moshe ben Yirmiyahu* Born on February 9, 1907, in *Homonna*, Hungary. He was the third child of his family. His sister *Blanca* (or *Blanche*), his brother *Yitzhak Tz'vi* (Harry), preceded him and he was followed by his brother Yoseph and sister Madeline, who would be the child of *Hermine's* second marriage. We're going to fast forward to a time in which his family was supported by his maternal grandfather, a wealthy wine grower of *Pethora*, who had married his daughter *Hermine* to a scholar, *Yirmeyahu*, as was customary in those days.

Max's father and two of his uncles had beautiful voices and functioned as Hazzanim on the High Holy Days. At the age of four, following the early death of his father, who succumbed to a heart attack, Max was sent to live with his aunt and uncle. His new life style was comfortable. He was the sole responsibility of a French maid who had been hired to watch over him. And so it was in his uncle's restaurant, Stern's Kosher Restaurant in Budapest, that Max sang publicly for the first time.

It became the custom on Friday evenings for little *Miklosh* to stand on a table and entertain guests and family with *Shabbos Z'miros*. Budapest was also a magnet for the famous Hazzanim of that day. In the same section of town as Stern's Restaurant was the large *Neolog* (liberal synagogue), known as the *Taback Temple*. *Zavel Kwartin* served there as Hazzan before immigrating to America. The well-known Jacob Bachman sang in the other large *Rombach Temple* of Budapest.

Although Max displayed obvious musical talent, there were no opportunities in *Yeshivot* for formal musical studies. Boys with vocal ability who were the sons of Hazzanim studied with their fathers, or they might have been apprenticed to other Hazzanim as *m'shor'rim*. The apprentice system was the usual course for learning the Cantorial craft.

Max was also curious about life beyond the *Yeshiva* and one of the most entertaining things you'll find in this book are the stories of his escapades, sneaking off to the theater. One evening he managed to slip away from *Yeshiva* early, tucking his *payot* behind his ears, walked to the theater, bought a ticket and saw his first play. He was soon hooked – often seeing several plays a week. The ushers grew to recognize him and he'd be permitted to sit in a vacant, more expensive seat when there was room. He also became curious about the society and culture that existed beyond the *Yeshiva* walls, secured novels (forbidden books), which he read in secret – starting with *Dostoyevsky's* "Crime and Punishment" – proceeding to "The Brothers Karamazov" – through Tolstoy's "War and Peace" – and the list goes on and on. His interest in reading never stopped during his lifetime, and in later years he would only regret that his eyesight no longer permitted him to read as voraciously as he had in his youth.

In 1923, Max came to America. His mother was here, his oldest brother and his brother's wife had moved, and he started life new again on 9th Street in lower Manhattan. We now turn to the first musical selection. You have it there in your hands in the book provided to you.

(Piano, Erica Lippitz singing Shalom Aleikhem, Eliyahu Hanavi)

(Applause)

(Piano in background – Perry Fine) You should have the *Umalkhuto B'ratzon* in the middle of the page, and please join in at the choir parts.

(Piano, Perry Fine singing in Hebrew)

This next setting is a prayer for the State of Israel.

(Piano, Perry Fine singing in Hebrew)

(Applause)

Erica Lippitz

It would be impossible to summarize in a few minutes all the places that Max Wohlberg served as Hazzan, and the influence he had, but let me highlight some of the more important moments. His first full-time job was at *Congregation Ahavat Achim* in College Point, Queens. The year was 1930 and, in the wake of the Depression, most congregations could not afford both a Rabbi and a Cantor – they were looking for a *Kol Bo*. So, there he was required to prepare sermons, attend to pastoral duties and, drawing upon the knowledge of Biblical exegesis, which he acquired during his *Yeshiva* days, he did all that.

But the sermons in English were a challenge to him. His English had greatly improved since his days as a sparkplug salesman, but his delivery was somewhat halting, and he often mispronounced words. Both Max and the congregation lived through his running battle with the language and, in his later lectures and speaking engagements, he was admired as a polished and precise speaker. In fact, his commitment to study was life long. He maintained a program of study that continued as intensely and steadfastly as it

had been in the *Yeshiva*. He set himself the task of becoming an expert in Jewish music. He methodologically read through the *Mishnah* and *Gemarah*, references to music – went on to study all the journals and books on Jewish music that he could find – and his copious notes formed the basis of the future lectures and articles for which he became well known.

His early days in New York, in truth, had been spent mostly with non-musical work. In contrast, his first full-time position gave him the time and perspective to focus specifically on Jewish music.

It was – pardon me. In 1935, he moved on to the Inwood Hebrew Congregation, where he stayed until 1941. It was there that he organized and conducted his first community choir, in addition to working with the professional octet of men and boys that he had for *Shabbat* and Festivals. The congregational melodies that he wrote for that choir and for that congregation became the basis of his first book of congregational melodies, published in 1948 – *Shirei Zimrah*.

One might also note that he was active in the development of Cantors' organizations. From 1933 until 1940, Cantors (at least in the New York area) were dependent upon the *Hazzanim Farband* and stories about the *Farband* in this book would make you glad that we have a Cantors Assembly. Then they tried a labor union -- Affiliated Hazzan Ministers' Alliance, and that didn't last. But all of these were preludes to the organization that we now, to which we now belong. In fact (pardon me, there's so much to say here and I want to make sure we don't run out of time for music)... In fact, during the years 1945 and 1946, Max met several times with Rabbi Max *Arzt* at JTS to explore the possibility of the Seminary's establishment of a school for the training of American Hazzanim.

In one of those meetings, *Arzt* told Max that Rabbi Lang had left his congregation and was now Rabbi of Beth El in West Philadelphia, looking for a Hazzan. So, in this same time period that we're describing all the scholarly work and articles and work with the *Farband* and work on developing a school, Max served at Inwood Hebrew Congregation, then moved to Beth El in Minneapolis after his son Jeffrey was born, and then moved to Emanuel in Hartford, and then moved to Beth El in Philadelphia.

We're now going to return to music, and Lorna and I are going to sing for you the Yism'khu.

Please do feel free. Sing along with us.

(Piano, Erica Lippitz and Lorna Wallach-Kalet Yismkhu)

(Applause)

Bill Lieberman

Please join in as we all do an ensemble piece, "The Psalm of David."

(Piano, multiple singers, singing in English)

(Applause)

Perry Fine

I think when – certainly when I think of Cantor Wohlberg, and I think many of us would agree – we think of him with a great deal of affection. This was a kind, sweet, gentle man. And I think it was built, personally, on a great deal of respect for him. Here is a man who was equally comfortable in Talmud and *Rabbinics* as he was in the world of *Hazelnut*. And yet, when you sang for him in his class – and I remember going into the first class, you know, I didn't know anything – he just was calm and loving and caring, and took you where you were and showed you. And there was that gentleness and kindness which I always

appreciated. That, coupled with a tremendous wit – I mean, just a funny man ... very funny – and a talent.

I remember, by that time, he was in his 80's, and he'd take the music and he would demonstrate everything, and with a clean pure tone of a man much younger. He could sing forever and sometimes, I think, his congregations didn't really understand how good he was. I had the privilege of being the student Cantor at the *Malverne* Jewish Center on Long Island. That was his last pulpit. And when you asked people about Cantor Wohlberg, they'd say, "yeah, it was nice, but...." I mean, he didn't have that big booming voice, but he had a sweet, gentle voice.

Years later, when I came to my pulpit in South Orange, New Jersey, he installed me and I think this was one of the last times he installed a Cantor – and I'd found out that, when we were giving out assignments for the High Holidays, there was one person who did *Minha* all the time – his name was *Jonathan Woocher*. You know the name. He's Executive Director of *JESNA*. And he did it...he did a beautiful job. And he'd start *Minha* with (*singing Yitgadal V'yitkadash*). I used to wonder, "How in the world do you know that – I'm just – how did you know that?" He said, "I grew up in the *Malverne* Jewish Center and Cantor Wohlberg was my Cantor. So he taught him all these duets...." And we did duets together, reminiscing about Cantor Wohlberg. Lovely man.

Titbarakh Tzurenu from Yahad B'kol, Please join in the refrain.

We'll just do the beginning and the end.

(Piano – Perry Fine, singing in Hebrew)

(Other voices join in at refrain)

Next page.

(Applause)

"*Sim Shalom*" from *Yahad B'kol*. Please join in.

(Piano – Perry Fine singing in Hebrew...other voices join in chorus)

(Applause)

Kenneth Cohen

I thought that, since so many of us here were touched by Cantor Wohlberg, it might be nice for us to re-experience what it was like being in class with our dear mentor. So here's a short trip down nusah memory lane.

Just a few moments for us to go back to a sweet man who loved us and shared with us his passion for prayer, our sacred music legacy Nusah.

(Recording of Max teaching a class demonstrating Mizmor Shir L'yom Hashabbat, Tzadik Katamar etc.)
Or something like that...*(laughter)...**continues singing)*

(Applause)

Recording of Max Wohlberg

Which suits the text better, according to me, who lived in 1980 in the United States – because, if I lived in 1870 in Germany or in Vilna, I would feel differently. For instance, we say to be major is jolly – to be minor is sad. Or in *Ahavah Rabah* (*Sings*). That would sound sad. Right? But not necessarily to

everybody. To the Egyptian, a major melody would be like a dirge, a funeral dirge, and we sing (*sings Yoshkeh, Yoshkeh*). (Sings freilachs, you sing Yism'khu, but to the major this would be a sad thing. So we must keep in mind that for us, today, we must qualify it.

(*Sings Likrat Shabbat, L'kha Dodi*)

Because of the text, *Mikdash Melekh*, and later on *Lo Tevoshi*, are often sung in my minor a disappointing quality (*Kumi Ts'i*) sanctuary of values – (*Mitokh Hahafekha*). They could leave it out of darkness – (*Rav Lokh Shevet B'emek Habakha*) -- value of the period. *Sitting in the valley of tears* Even if you sing it in minor – end it in major; people will have all these images. Let me illustrate. (*Mikdash Melekh*). This is not a must...this is not a must, but you will come across this very often. That *Mikdash Melekh* is sung in minor ... and the same thing will happen with *Lo Tevoshi*.

(*Applause*)

Kenneth Cohen

I almost feel like I could get ready for the *Nusah comps*, with all the scale degrees and references. This particular setting of Psalm 23 I first heard and sang at the funeral, actually, of Cantor Wohlbreg's wife. It's very meaningful to me. It reminds me of being there with him at, perhaps, one of the saddest days of his life and his memory. Let us join together -- Psalm 23 – beautiful setting.

(*Piano, Kenneth Cohen*)

(*Applause*)

David Lefkowitz

We've heard about Max's humor and most of us, who are familiar with some of the things he did in class – I'm actually going to go to a different subject, but I can't resist the temptation. I heard one of his jokes last night that a colleague was telling me – that the Bar Mitzvah kids in Philadelphia would receive a pack of gifts. Among which were a *Siddur* and an umbrella – The *Siddur*, which rarely was opened, and the umbrella, which frequently got opened. And, of course, his jokes about his size – but, while he may have been short in physical stature, he was really a giant. And for me, I knew a side of Max that hasn't been talked about, and that was the one-on-one relationship. He was a tremendous mentor and I'd like to just focus on some memories and anecdotes, which were really very tender and loving. They were serious, but they remained with me always and really made a difference.

He was concerned with humility in leading prayer. He was concerned with a logic of the *Hazzanut*, of the music, not to be showing off but to be interpreting *T'filah*. If words were repeated, there had to be a logic of why they were repeated. The phrasing of texts were very important to him and we had discussions, actually, where he talked about the importance of accentuation and how it was always important not just to phrase the Hebrew, but that the Hebrew made logical musical sense. And that there were many different ways of accomplishing a faithfulness to the Hebrew text which didn't destroy a musical sequence – that words could be spread out. That there were mistakes that Hazzanim in the middle part of the 20th Century were making, when they would quickly go to the accented part of the word and then they were going on one syllable through a *melismatic* phrase, which could have been more logically transformed through breaking the word.

Also that the beginning of a measure isn't necessarily the only place where there is a stress mark; that there are other ways of having strong beats. So, that was important to me. I remember on occasion in my first year in school, I brought in a transcription that I had done of a *Mimkom'kha* that I had from a recording that I loved from early childhood. Max was very gentle and respectful of my Cantorial background, but he didn't let me get stuck on that. I brought in this *Mimkom'kha* that my father had sung. He had a weekly radio broadcast and *Heinrich Schalit* was the organist – and *Schalit* would improvise these incredible harmonies. They were so beautiful and ... so I notated the *Hazzanut* in detail and

notated the harmonies and I showed it to Max and he said, "It's very nice, but you were weaned on this, so let yourself move on – explore all that there is."

One of the funny moments that I had, but I was really embarrassed and scared – he asked me to come out to his home for my High Holiday *Nusah* comprehensive. So I came to his home in Malverne and among – he asked me certain things and I did them. He said, "Well I know you know these." He says, "Could you sing *Apid Nezer*?" So I said, "you mean (*sings few words Apid Nezer*) ... He said, "Continue." (*Laughter*) Well, he said, "But you see That's the point." He says, "I want you students to be able to know these details so that you can transmit this to further generations."

He also taught me lasting influences about modulations. He said, "You know, it's not healthy *Hazzanically* and musically and vocally to just stay in just one key. And you can make it more interesting – it's better for the voice – but you need to know where you're going with it." And he just, you know, shared such beautiful details with me. How do you move up a half step or how do you move down a half step so that the congregational melody is easier. Or if the key changes and you've got a choral piece coming up that you need to have up a half step – how to get there. These kinds of things. As a result, I became more familiar with the modes – how Cantorially to get in and around these.

I just want to say that the piece today is an honor for me to sing. It's a challenge as well, and it's not a straightforward piece. It's – there are many levels here. He beautifully depicts the Hebrew phrasing and he also brings out nuances of the text – some of the philosophy, the emotions of the text. So I'll try to bring some of these forth.

(Piano, David Lefkowitz.. *Shir Hama'a lot Lish'lomo, Ps. 127*)

(Applause)

Erica Lippitz

A few quick notes and then kindly take out the *Hatov Ki Lo Holu Rahamekha* that was distributed as a separate page. First I want to note that Max Wohlberg served as the President of this Cantors Assembly from 1948 to 1951. In 1951, he also began developing the curriculum for the school, concerned that the way that teachers of *Hazzanut* were accustomed to teaching was based upon their own experience, which then depended upon their country of origin and the material that was given to them by their own teachers. Max thought that such a one-sided approach was not correct. He wanted Hazzanim to be exposed to all existing traditions. He, therefore, formulated a curriculum based upon an analysis of Eastern, Western and Central European *Hazzanut*, which permitted the student to select a suitable personal style, based upon full knowledge of all available material.

He wrote in one of the articles what he thought the ideal Hazzan ought to be. "One who knows everything about Jewish music and is completely familiar with general music. One who knows the prayer book in its entirety, as well as its history and the development of the prayers. One who knows the place of *Nusah Hat'filah* in all its aspects, and who is able to use that knowledge for the creation of new forms of Jewish musical expression. And one who is able to use his abilities in the service of the Almighty."

Kindly sing with me. This is a melody we use almost every *Shabbos* because Professor Wohlberg taught me how to modulate from *Ahavah Rabah* to *Minor*, and it's too good a melody not to use.

(Piano, Erica Lippitz, *Hatov Ki Lo* other voices join in)

First Verse...

The Refrain...

Second Verse...

Pick it up...

I'd like to invite Bill Lieberman back to close the program and I'd like to note that the *Hatov Ki lo Halu Rahamekha*, as it says on your page, is not a manuscript. It comes from one of the two books that the Cantor's Assembly publishes. I hope you have them both. Azam'rah B'Odi is the one from which the *Hatov* comes. The other book that is available through the CA is *Yahad B'Kol*, published in 1975.

William Lieberman

Charles Davidson and Joe Levine both send regrets for not being able to participate in today's tribute. However, Joe did forward me the following thoughts:

{“Bill, thanks for the invitation, but we'll be overseas at that time. So here are a few thoughts that I'll ask you to please deliver on my behalf.

Distinguished colleagues, it's my loss that I can't be with you to observe our teacher's 100th birthday. But I can remind you that Max Wohlberg was a master- not only of *nusah*- but also of the hilarious one-liner at the right moment. If he walked into a classroom and spotted a lighted cigarette, he'd say with a straight face, “You can smoke—if **you don't** exhale.” (*Laughter*)

He was also a master of improvisation, especially of the numerical *Midrash* known as **Gematriyah**. If he were alive and standing here before you, I'm sure Max would say something like, “Well, today marks my 100th birthday, and the word *mei'ah* in Hebrew means “**one hundred**.” Yet, if we were to total the numerical value of the letters of *mei'ah*-- **Mem-Aleph-Heh**-- **we** would find that they only add up to 46.

Now, I know that whenever I'm asked to speak before an audience, in order to calm people's fears that my remarks will be overly long, I tell them not to **worry**-- **as** usual, I'll be very short. (*Laughter*) But 46 years instead of 100 is more than short, **it's** an insult! How would it sound if we wished someone that they should have the **zekhut** to live to-- 46 and 20. That's only 66, the **gematriyah of ne'edar, or “missing.”**

Exactly how much is missing from 120? 54, **the** same total as the letters of the Hebrew word **nad**, meaning “**to wander**.” So, like a good musician, I'd better quit while I'm behind **bars**-- or else you all might insist that I finish my sentence -- since, unfortunately, I'm not on parole..... **To** which we all say ...

Amein, Selah (to last 3 bars of Max's Rosh *Hodesh Bentsh'n*)!

William Lieberman – conclusion

My heartfelt thanks and appreciation to my colleagues, the presenters of today's tribute to the life and music of Max Wohlberg-- Hazzanim Ken Cohen, Perry Fine, David Lefkowitz, Sheldon Levin, Ricky Lippitz and Lorna Wallach-Kalet. If anyone is interested in obtaining a copy of Charles Davidson's book, “Max Wohlberg, American Cantor”, order forms are here at the podium.

Please join with us as we conclude the program with a 1950 version of *Adon Olam*. Please join in the refrain.

(*Piano, William Lieberman, with all assembled joining in on refrain*)

(*Applause*)

(*Piano background*)

Thank you.

(*Piano only*)

Steve Stoehr

Thank you, everyone. All right, folks. 6:30 is dinner. Enjoy some free time. Hospitality Room is open.

THE MUSIC AND LIFE OF MAX WOHLBERG
Cantors Assembly Convention – Hudson Valley Resort
Monday, May 8, 2006
4:00 -5:00 PM

Erica Lippitz (Part I - Childhood)

From “Max Wohlberg – American Cantor”

Yalkut Z'mirotai

P.7: Shalom Aleikhem

P.42: Eiliyahu Hanavi

Lorna Wallach-Kalet

Ar'vit L'hol

P.6: Mikhomokho

P.18: Prayer For Israel

Perry Fine

Erica Lippitz (Part II – Active Years)

From “Max Wohlberg – American Cantor”

Chemdat Shabbat

P.36: Yism'chu

Erica Lippitz & Lorna Wallach-Kalet

High Holiday Hymns

P.8: A Psalm Of David

Community Sing

Perry Fine (Personal Thoughts)

Yachad B'kol

P.22: Titbarach

P.44: Sim Shalom

Perry Fine

Kenneth Cohen (Personal Thoughts)

Pirkei Zemer

P. 12: Mizmor L'David IV (Psalm 23)

Kenneth Cohen

David Lefkowitz (Personal Thoughts)

Pirkei Zemer

P.25: Shir Hama'alot LiSh'lomo (Psalm 127)

David Lefkowitz

Erica Lippitz (Part III – JTS Years and Beyond)

From “Max Wohlberg – American Cantor”

Manuscript

Hatov Ki Lo Chalu

Erica Lippitz

William Lieberman (Reflections from Joe Levine)

Manuscript

Adon Olam, 1950

William Lieberman & Community Chorus

Sheldon Levin, piano accompanist

Annual Address of the Executive Vice President
Presenter: Hazzan Steven Stein
Tuesday May 9, 2006, 9:30 a.m.

There is a saying that suggests, "The only thing constant is change." Every generation has claimed that the world around it was changing. And, they were right. What has been most unique in the past 50 years (and especially the last 10 years) has been the pace of change. *Wired* magazine recently ran a series on the past 10 years of technological change. Ten years ago the founder of Amazon.com was still trying to convince people that selling books online was possible; he was delivering orders to the post office in his Chevy Blazer. Nine years ago, Polaroid introduced the first consumer one-mega pixel digital camera, which cost over \$3,500. Five years ago, a college dropout introduced a service called "Napster" which led to a revolution in how music is purchased and delivered. Three years ago, Apple Computer released the iPod, hoping they might sell a few hundred thousand. They sold over a million units in less than a year. And, consider some of what happened just last year:

The national phenomenon of blogging took off. It is estimated that a new blog is created every second – over 80,000 in a day

An appearance by Jon Stewart a few months back on a CNN show was seen by more people online than on television

A new phenomenon known as podcasting has emerged. For those of you who are not quite up to speed on this technology, podcasting is the distribution of audio programming through the internet and played back on the user's MP3 player at his or her whim.

Is the pace of change likely to affect us in the Cantorate? You bet! Many of us, I'm sure, feel that the velocity of change is too rapid. Though, I dare say, if you are someone waiting for a cure to an illness that has afflicted you or someone you love, you are praying for medical technology to advance more speedily.

Chances are your parents and grandparents hand wrote letters to family and friends, but how many of us still write letters? And when it comes to our children, forget it. The younger generation communicates almost exclusively by cellphone and e-mail, text and instant messaging. It is not far-fetched to predict that today's young people, after the low-tech summer-camp years are over, may never again in their lives put pen to paper to write a personal letter.

For decades, the cornerstone of family entertainment had been going to the movies. But, with all the home entertainment options now available, there has been a decline in movie theatre attendance for three consecutive years.

For any profession, including our own to remain relevant, taking into account the speed of change in today's society, we are going to have to be aware of what is happening in the culture around us and we will have to re-evaluate our priorities and goals no less often than every few years. The theme of the Cantor as "more than a singer", novel and creative in the 1980's, is no longer so. We have gotten that message across. It is clear from the job descriptions that congregations submit to us that they see the hazzan as a multi-faceted individual immersed in education and pastoral work, along with music.

There is an organization known as the Alban Institute. Its mission is to conduct research on congregations of all faiths, guiding churches and synagogues, along with professional and lay leaders, in how to best serve their constituencies. Recent articles in their periodical, the foundation for much of what I am sharing this morning, suggests that while in the past, pastoral leadership was about playing various roles, that may no longer be sufficient. Clergy schooled and skilled in all the right roles may still find themselves presiding over declining synagogues and churches, battered by complaining congregants, and wondering why their answers don't work anymore.

To be sure, as hazzanim we have an obligation to ourselves and to those we serve to develop our voices to their fullest potential and to maintain our singing at the highest possible level. Every hazzan should have a voice teacher and/or vocal coach with whom he/she studies weekly, regardless of age and experience. But, of equal if not greater importance now and into the immediate future may be the manner in which we touch the lives of others. On the one hand, attendance at services may be down. On the other, we see that our congregants are reaching out to us. Try as they may to display an aura of confidence, it is often a façade masking an inner insecurity. People are concerned about being able to keep up with rapid technological changes. Will we be able to figure out how to work the new electronic gadgets that are constantly being introduced? Of greater concern, since 9/11, we don't feel as safe as we used to. We worry about terrorism on our own soil, in addition to the daily security threats facing our beloved state of Israel.

It has been suggested that the clergy of the future will need the heart of a servant. In other words, we must understand that our purpose is to enrich the lives of others. Remember the words of the *Hin'ni* which speak of our humility. It is essential to balance modesty with a sense of professional pride, but professional pride is different from egotism. We are not in this profession to have our own needs met. Our purpose is to serve others; we best not forget that. This certainly is not meant to imply that we be a doormat, to be so self-sacrificing that we do injury to ourselves relinquishing our own integrity. The willingness to devote one's self to making the lives of others better must come from an inner strength and confidence. It is not to be a sign of weakness.

The clergyperson of the future needs to be an architect. The greatest challenge of the architect is to be both an artist and a mechanic – to see the grand design and at the same time attend to the details, to create a thing of beauty that works effectively.

It has been suggested that the clergy of the future must have the strength of a gymnast. Imagine the fortitude it takes to run full speed into failure. That's essentially what a gymnast does on every vault. The chances of achieving a perfect 10 on a vault are infinitesimal. The chances of missing the landing are great, even for accomplished gymnasts. And yet they are able to focus their effort, marshal their strength of body and mind and enter into the challenge ahead of them. And they are able to bounce back quickly from a failure and try again, perhaps taking an even greater risk the next time. That's the kind of strength clergy need for the future. It will require a strength that enables us to focus even in the face of possible failure, because the solutions to the challenges we confront may not be clear or perhaps don't even exist. We will need a strength that enables us to move into the challenge ahead with great intensity, even if we cannot be sure of the outcome, because anything less will lack the energy needed for the task at hand.

Clergy of the future will need the legs of marathoners. Marathoners are in it for the long haul. The goals set may not be quickly accomplished. *Lo Alecha Hamlacha Ligmor*. The transitions that are taking place in society are leading us some place new, but we are not yet sure of our destination. Who among us truly knows what lies ahead? Leaders for the future will need to stick to the missions they believe in. They will need to try and fail and try again. They will need to keep learning, discovering and discerning. They will need to deal with those who resist change, those who clamor for more and faster change, those who are tired, those who are fearful, those who are annoyed, and those who want to give up.

Perhaps the most striking physical characteristic of the marathoner is leanness. Some baggage from the past must be discarded, setting aside programs and priorities that no longer serve our purpose. As Conservative Jews, whose motto is "tradition and change" our challenge is to determine what shall be preserved and what we should set aside.

And, the leader of the future should have the soul of a poet. Poets combine words and images in ways that create new realities for us. They help us feel as well as think. Poets help us to see what we could not see before, creating new possibilities and realities for us.

For the past few moments I have been speaking in metaphors. In truth, no one person could embody all of these qualities. So, the leader for the future of a synagogue is not a person, but rather a team. It will require the combined efforts of a hazzan, a rabbi, an educator and a team of dedicated and wise lay

leaders to effectively lead a congregation. Upon being named the next chancellor of JTS, Dr. Eisen spoke of the need to re-energize synagogues by doing a better job of engaging the laity.

Is there a correlation between our singing and our ability to touch those we serve? The answer is, “yes.” Music has always occupied an important role in the lives of people, from youth to adulthood. It can have both a physiological and psychological impact on humanity. Music has many therapeutic qualities and has been utilized in promoting both physical and psychological healing by reducing stress.

Numerous studies have shown the benefit of music on the human nervous system. Music can equalize and slow down brain waves, affect respiration, heartbeat and pulse, reduce muscle tension, increase endorphin levels, regulate stress-related hormones, boost the immune system and produce a feeling of well being. Music can relax a newborn child and elicit a response from elderly patients with diminished faculties. Music has been used to calm the agitation of Alzheimer’s patients. Those afflicted will sometimes respond to music when nothing else seems to work.

With the use of music, a person in surgery may require less anesthesia. Therapists have found that music can help patients better manage postoperative discomfort. Some hospitals are using music to help cancer patients cope with physical and emotional pain. As we plan for the future of the Cantorate, continuously re-evaluating our priorities, perhaps classes in music therapy should be added to our course of study.

I would like to conclude my speech this morning with a few quotations from *perek gimel* of *Pirkei Avot* (passages referred to are 12 and 13).

Finally, Rabbi Elazar Ben Azariah compares one whose wisdom exceeds his good deeds to a tree with many branches and few roots. A strong wind can uproot and topple over the tree. The person, in contrast, whose good deeds exceed his wisdom, may be likened to the tree with few branches but many roots. It is far more likely to survive the strong wind and flourish.

My hope for all of you my dear colleagues is that your good deeds will continue to multiply in the years ahead.

The Genius of Abraham Joshua Heschel
Tuesday May 9, 2006 11:30 a.m.
Presenter: Rabbi Gordon Tucker

Marc Dinkin

It is my esteemed privilege this afternoon to welcome Rabbi Gordon Tucker, who has been at Temple Israel Center in White Plaines, sharing the pulpit with our esteemed colleague Jack Mendelson. Rabbi Tucker has been at the Temple since 1994. In 2003, he was named Senior Rabbi. A native of New York City, he holds the AB Degree from Harvard University and a PhD in philosophy from Princeton University. The Jewish Theological Seminary of America ordained him a Rabbi in 1975.

Currently Rabbi Tucker is Honorary Chairman of the Board of the Masorti Foundation for Conservative Judaism in Israel and a member of the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards of the Rabbinical Assembly. Rabbi Tucker joined the faculty of JTS in 1976 and has taught there continuously ever since. He is currently Adjunct Assistant Professor of Jewish philosophy. From 1984 to 1992, Rabbi Tucker was Dean of the Rabbinical School at JTS, in which capacity he directed the training of over 200 Rabbis.

Rabbi Gordon Tucker

(Applause)

Thank you, Marc. Did I hear there is a whole bunch of Yale'is in the room? *(Laughter)* Yeah? Ok...I mean both Harvard and Princeton got hissed! So – ok. *Urim v' tumim. (Laughter)*

Steve Stoehr asked me to teach here and I was delighted to do it. The only little hitch was that he asked me to teach about Heschel, which was fine because I did last year bring out a translation and a commentary on Heschel's long work on rabbinic theology called "*Torah Min Hashamayim*" -- and its English title is "Heavenly Torah" – so that was fine. And I've been doing some teaching from that book, as you might imagine, over the last year, but he also wanted me to talk about Heschel on liturgy. And there's the hitch. He says a lot of things on a lot of subjects in "*Torah Min Hashamayim*". There's virtually nothing about liturgy in there, except (I didn't have the heart to tell Steve this – he was giving me an impossible assignment) – except that there is actually one section early on in "*Torah Min Hashamayim*" that does, in effect, tell us some important things about liturgy, or at least raise some important questions about it. And, we will be sure to get to that before we are done.

What I'd like to do here, therefore, is range over a number of his earlier works. Some things he has had to say about prayer, public and private, the role of the clergy in prayer, the role of institutions of prayer in the life of prayer. Some of these sources may be known to some of you; some, I am sure, will be a little less known, and to use it as a way of just sparking some thought. And, if it sparks some comments and some questions, I am happy to take them as we go along; but I will manage that time so that we get through at least the things that I am anxious to get through. So don't be inhibited about raising your hand at some point and I'll try, in the midst of these blinding lights, try to do my best to see hands as they go up and, if there are some relevant comments or pointed questions along the way, we'll make room for that.

So let's begin here on Page 1 of this handout that everyone has. I assume, by the way, with the way everything is being pushed back, that we have the same hour that was planned. Is that correct? OK.

So let's look at the first text in the upper left-hand corner. This is ... I have taken this out of a collection of essays that was edited by Heschel's daughter, Suzanna Heschel – a wonderful book that, if you don't have, you should own – "Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity" – which was published just a number of years ago. But this essay from which this comes, on prayer, was actually published in "The Review of Religion" in 1945.

“About 100 years ago”, he writes – this is how he begins the essay – “Rabbi Isaac Mayer Alter of Ger – now *Yitzchak Mayer of Ger*...usually you see that in Hebrew as *Gur* and actually in Polish it is *Goracalvaria*, which is, my friend and colleague and teacher of many of us Art Green likes to point out, is one of the symptoms of living in *Golas* that *Goracalvaria* means ‘Calvary hill.” And, to be the *Rebbe* of Calvary hill...right? This is the very essence of *Golas*. You know, it’s like the St. Mary *Hassidim* and so on. I mean we have all this ... this is a – no that’s not a joke. That’s what *sockmar* is.

So in any event, *Yitzchak Mayer* is better known as – another quaint thing about the Jewish tradition is how people are known by the names of their books – right? So one of the famous *Gerer Rebbe*’s was the *S’fas Emes*. Right. That wasn’t his name; it was the name of his most famous work, *the Hofetz Hayyim*. That wasn’t his name, right, it was *Yisrael Mayer Hakohen Kagen*, but he was known as ...

And this is something...I imagine it’s not entirely unique to the Jewish tradition, but it is distinctive about us. It’s as if Shakespeare became known as “The Hamlet.” Not to my knowledge did anything like that ever happen, but, being identified with the words and the ideas that you put out is an interesting thing in and of itself. *Yitzchak Mayer* was known as the *Hidush’eirim*. When you see the *Hidush’eirim* the *noveli* of *Yitzchak Mayer*, that’s who we’re talking about.

So – About 100 years ago, he writes, “he pondered the question of what a certain shoemaker of his acquaintance should do about his morning prayer. The weekday *shaharit*. Here was the problem. His customers were poor men who owned only one pair of shoes. So the shoemaker used to pick up their shoes at a late evening hour and work on them the whole night and part of the morning, right through the break of dawn, in order to deliver them before their owners had to go to work. So when should the shoemaker say his morning prayer? Course *Z’reizim Akdamim L’mitzvot*, if he’s up when the dawn breaks, he really should drop everything and *daven* then. So should he pray quickly the first thing in the morning and then go back to work? But that could be depriving some of the poor people of their livelihood. They’ll get to work later, they’ll do less work (they’re paid by the piece), and they will be losing money. Or should he continue his work and let the appointed hour of prayer go by and every once in a while, raising his hammer from the shoes, utter a sigh “woe unto me, I haven’t prayed yet?” Perhaps that sigh is worth more than prayer itself.

A story that I think needs no commentary – it’s sort of self-commenting – about what he’s getting at here – what *Yitzchak Mayer* was getting at and what *Heschel* was trying to get at by starting off this essay on prayer with this evocative question. So we’ll have occasion to get back to this, but with that as a kind of an opener and as a prologue, let’s go on to a source that’s not usually thought of as a place where *Heschel* is talking about prayer – and yet he does say some interesting things about *t’filah* in his book “The Prophets.”

“The Prophets” – that English work – was published in 1962, but it was based on, it was an expansion of, his doctoral dissertation written in German several decades earlier on “The Prophets”, which he wrote in Berlin. And, that it’s based on a kind of a German academic work – an academic work in German – in part accounts for some of the high faluting technical language in here, such as the very first word that we find in this selection, which is *Theo tropism*. I don’t know when the last time you used that in regular conversation was. I never have. This is a section in “The Prophets” where he contrasts *anthropotropism* with *Theo tropism*. Makes it even worse. But just to clarify very quickly – well you know what phototropism is – when plants turn towards the sun, towards the light. So *anthrop tropism* is turning towards human beings. That’s something that God does, which was, in effect, what *Heschel* was trying to teach us throughout this work is really the way to understand biblical prophesy.

Whether you believe it really happens, really happened, or not is a separate question. If you want to understand the phenomenon of biblical prophesy, you have to understand it as a divine turning to human beings – to particular human beings – for something that is going to fulfill a divine need. God’s inner emotional life requires God turning to a human prophet to be able to convey that emotional reality of God to other human beings. So that’s *anthrop tropism*.

The converse of that is when human beings turn to God. *Theo tropism*, man's turning to God, is a structure of experience that may be attained through the performance of ritual acts, prayer, meditation – not an exhaustive list. Ritual acts is the most prominent of these and it is first on the list. And we know it very well because of what we've been reading in *shul* the last several weeks. "*Vayikra*" is the *Theo tropic* book par excellence in this respect – that there are rituals that the authorized functionary of the community, not by virtue of being called but by virtue of his status and the authority invested in him by the community – there are ritual acts that are done under the supervision of that person that are meant to be a turning to God – whether it is for forgiveness, for healing or for purification, or whatever it might be.

It is characteristic of exercises performed in order to induce the state of ecstasy and communion with God. Of efforts of a magic nature aimed at establishing contact with the sphere of the divine. So just go back a few days and think about the S'ir Hamishtaleach, the goat that is sent off into the wilderness to *Azazel* -- a quasi, or maybe not even quasi-magical act aimed at establishing contact in some meaningful way with the sphere of the divine.

But now *Heschel* focuses on the second thing on the list. Not on ritual acts per se but on prayer – that can be a form of turning to God. Prayer, too, is an act consisting of a moment or decision or turning, and of a moment of direction. For to be engaged in prayer and to be away from prayer are two different states of living and thinking. You are a different person when you're in prayer. In the depth of the soul there is a distance between the two. The course of consciousness which a person pursues, the way of thinking by which he lives most of the time, are remote from the course and way of thinking peculiar to prayer. To be able to pray, one must alter the course of consciousness. One must go through moments of disengagement. One must enter another course of thinking. One must face in a different direction.

The most commonly done and also, I think, most commonly overlooked reflection of this expression of what it means to be altering one's consciousness and to be disengaging, and to be going into a state of ecstasy – because what ecstasy means quite literally – the literal meaning of the word means "to be outside of the place", or. As we might say in English – not in the colloquial use of the term – "beside yourself"

The most commonly performed act that is also the most commonly overlooked is – I take three steps forward before the *Amidah*. If I happen to be standing near a wall, I take three steps back first so that I don't crash my head into the wall. But the essential, the essential choreography is ... three steps forward and, at the end, three steps back. Why? Because I am supposed to be entering a different space. Think of yourself as a director of some play and you want to create a different reality on the stage from what the actor is in right now. Perhaps it's a flash back. Whatever it might be, you will either direct the actor or actress to turn around dramatically or the stage will be darkened and the light will come up on a different part of the stage. There's going to be what is essentially a symbolic change or space, which is going to be about a change of consciousness – about creating a different world.

In the oft-quoted *Midrash* about Moses ending up in *Akiva's Academy* -- everyone knows this story – wants to meet this man who will be this great exegetical superstar some day – and when God is going to send Moses to see *Akiva's Academy*, he says to him, "*Hazor L'aharekha*" -- "Turn around." It's the perfect staging. Moses has to turn around because, when you change your orientation, you change your direction or you literally change where you are – even by three little steps – it is expressing something critical about prayer. You can't do it in your normal space. You can't do it with your normal way of thinking. Something has to change significantly. And that's what *Heschel* is now beginning to describe about prayer.

Top of the second column..."The course one must take in order to arrive at prayer is on the way to God." And now he's going to say something very, very interesting and, in a way, counter intuitive – so pay attention here. "The focus of prayer is not the self. A man may spend hours meditating about himself, will be stirred by the deepest sympathy for his fellow man, and no prayer will come to pass. Prayer comes to pass in a complete turning of the heart toward God, toward his goodness and power. It is the momentary disregard of one's personal concerns, the absence of self-centered thoughts, which constitute

the art of prayer. Feeling becomes prayer in the moment in which one forgets one's self and becomes aware of God."

"When we analyze the consciousness of a supplicant, we discover that it is not concentrated upon his own interests, but on something beyond the self. The thought of personal need is absent and the thought of divine grace alone is present in his mind. Thus, in beseeching him for bread ... *Barekh alenu Adonay Eloheinu et hashanah hazot v'et kol miney t'vuatah l'tovah v'ten b'rakha* ...etc. In beseeching God for bread, there is one instant, at least, in which the mind is directed neither to one's hunger nor to food but to God's mercy, and this instant is prayer."

Now I deliberately quoted the ninth *b'rakha* of the *Amidah*, because those middle *b'rakhot* on the weekday *Amidah* are exactly what seem to contradict what Heschel is saying here. The core of our daily *t'filah* is thinking about our needs and directing those needs to God. In fact, one of the ways of understanding, I think, why the *Amidah* of *Shabbat* eliminates all of that is precisely because *Shabbat* is supposed to be the day on which you are not focused so much on the things you don't have but on the things you do have. *Shabbat* is supposed to be a day in which you are focused on the blessings of life and all that goes along with it and, if you begin asking God for things, you're inevitably going to be focused on all the things you are lacking. Not a very *Shabbosdik* point to view to adopt.

And yet Heschel tells us that you can be as sincere as possible in asking for things for yourself, not outrageous, luxurious things – the necessities of life. You can be as sincere as you want in saying *T'ka b'shofar l'herutenu v'sa nes l'kabetz galuyotenu* – and be thinking about Jews in Iran and Jews in places where they are oppressed, and thinking only of your fellow human beings – and prayer may still not be happening, because it's still not something that is connecting with the divine reality. It is sending something out there to something you hope is there, that will hear something about my needs or my fellow human beings' needs.

Laudable, admirable -- nothing wrong with it. But not the same as having empathy or an intuition about what it is that is in the divine consciousness. What God's inner life is. Exactly – this is why it's in the book of "The Prophets." Because he has spent this whole book – we are already on page 440, you see – developing this idea that God, from the point of view of the classic Jewish tradition, does have an inner emotional life. And to connect to that, to have that kind of empathy for God – in that instant (and it may just last an instant), that's when prayer happens. That is *t'filah*...the sense that I have taken three steps forward and I am literally now in touch with a different consciousness.

In prayer we shift the center of living from self-consciousness to self-surrender. God is the center toward which all forces tend. God is the source. We are the flowing of God's force – the ebb and flow of God's tides. Or you might extend this a little bit. Other modern philosophers have talked about human beings as being the waves in the ocean, which is God. Bundles of local energy, we are, with our own identity, but not really separable from the ocean itself. And until we feel that – that we are not separate, that we are ultimately connected to the source of all, prayer is not really happening. It's a challenging idea, which is going to become even more challenging when he, in other passages, gets us to question. So what do we need to do to bring the possibility of that kind of prayer to ourselves and to our communities, and what are the things that stand in the way?

A student of mine recently pointed out, when I was talking about a passage very similar to this in Heschel, just a kind of a cute acronym, which is a good thing to keep in mind because there's a certain amount of truth in it, that ego – the word ego – can be taken to mean "Edges God Out." Right? The self-consciousness that you had before you took the three steps forward somehow keeps God on the margin. And this is a very classic Hassidic idea that you've got to get beyond the ego and beyond the *Anohiyut* in order really to experience the connection with the one source of everything.

So now let's go back to that essay that we started with, with the perplexity of the *Hidushim* about the shoemaker, and see what he says a little further on in that essay. It's at the bottom of the right-hand column on Page 1, which is going really to build on what we just read from "The Prophets."

"To a farmer about to prepare a seed bed, the prerequisite for his undertaking is not the accidental need of a crop. That's an accident. I happen to need food now – I've run out, or I'm going to run out at a certain time, and I need to plant more. "His need of food does not endow him with skill in cultivating the earth. It merely affords the stimulus and purpose for his undertaking. I better plant. But what if you don't know how to plant. You're needing to plant is not going to do you any good unless you know how. It is his knowledge, his possession of the idea of tillage, which enables him to raise crops. The same principle", he says, "applies to prayer."

And, before we...let's just...because he leaves the first clause out here essentially, which is, the fact that I need things, the fact that I feel a sense of dependence on some force beyond me, the fact that I need to turn to a higher power – to use kind of recovery language here – to do things that I can't do myself – all of that is excellent. But it is only the accident of my life that requires me to turn to someone in prayer.

But what if I don't know how to do it. What if I am not skilled in being able to do it. It is the natural loyalty of living, fertilized by faith saved through a lifetime that is the soil on which prayer can grow. Laden with secret fertility and patient discreteness concerning things to be and things forever unknown, the soil of the soul nourishes and holds the roots of prayer. But the soil by itself does not produce crops. There must also be the idea of prayer to make the soul yield its amazing fruit. And so what is the idea of prayer? It may seem to be the assumption of man's ability to accost God and to lay our hopes, sorrows and wishes before Him – those 13 middle lessons of the *Amidah* – but this assumption is a paraphrase rather than a precise expression of what we believe.

Now just look at the last 6 lines or so of this paragraph. "Contact with God is not our achievement. It is a gift coming down to us from on high like a meteor, rather than rising up like a rocket. Before the words of prayer come to the lips, the mind must believe in God's willingness to draw near to us, and in our ability to clear the path for his approach. Such belief is the idea that leads us toward prayer. The expression of that, of course, is – after you've taken the three steps forward, you say *Adonay s'fatay tiftakh u'fi yagid t'hilatekha*– before I can really ... I can say words any time I want, but before those words become truly words of prayer (of *t'filah*), God has to make it possible for me. And that's a matter – that's a statement of faith, that there is a God who can do that – who can turn, in that sense, towards me. It's a wonderful extension of the idea of biblical prophecy, where God picks one or two or three people to turn to in a generation. At the moment of *t'filah*, you are expressing a faith that God could be turning to you at that moment, to create a different kind of consciousness – to create this empathy and connection with the divine pathos that will enable you to get beyond the ego and to really connect to that which is most real.

So the next page, probably the most challenging for all of us, is how structures hinder us.

This is from "Man's Quest For God", published in the early 50's, which has since been reprinted in a more correct form as "Quest For God." I remember *Avram Holtz* at the seminary once advised a student to go read "Man's Quest For God" and the student dutifully went and, you know, looked it up in the catalogue...in a book catalogue somewhere...and said, "There is no such book." And Dr. *Holtz* said to him, "It's impossible. It's one of the greatest books every written. How can you say there's no such book?" Well, it had been reprinted as "Quest for God", taking "Man's" out of it, and he was completely unaware of that. But this is the original title and look what he says here.

"We worry a great deal about the problem of church and state." It's comforting to know it's not just a problem of 2006 – it was back in the 1950's also. "Now what about the church and God. Sometime there seems to be a greater separation between the church and God than between the church and state." (*laughter*) Or as I sometimes like to kid around, you know, you must really have a lot of guts to get up and talk about the G-man in *shul*. I know that's very *unpeceil*, so...

Look what he says here. "It has become a habit with modern movements to decapitate biblical verses. Some such decapitated verses have become famous slogans. The name of the *BILU* movement is an abbreviation of *bet yud lamed vav*, or "House of Jacob, come let us walk." The very next verse in Isaiah, after "Lo yisagoy el goy herev lo yilm'du od milhamah", but the essence of the verse *B'or Adonay*, which

are the next two words – “in the light of the Lord” – omitted disciples of Aḥad Ha’am proclaimed *Lo v’hayil v’lo v’hoakh ki im b’ruakh*. Yet the prophet had said, *Ki im b’ruḥi* – “my spirit ... God’s spirit.”

The Jewish National Fund has as its official motto “*V’ha’arets lo timaḥel litz’mitut*” – we’ll read it in a week and a half – “the land shall not be sold forever.” But the end of the verses – *Ki li ha’arets ... (laughter)* – not because you can reclaim it and own it and assert your ownership over. For nobody can assert ownership over it. It’s God’s. And during the last war, the popular slogan among Russian Jews was, “*Lo amut ki ehyeh*”, but the continuation of “*Vasaper ma’ase Yah*” was dropped. Institutions, JNF, Zionism, whatever it is, have this habit of decapitating biblical verses. It’s not a decapitation really – it is a desacrilization. It’s eliminating the God language.

OK. Now let’s get a little closer to home. Twenty pages later on. The prominence given to the sermon, as if the sermon were the core and prayer the *shell*, is not only a drain on the intellectual resources of the preacher – I’m not sure exactly what he means there, but I assume, living this as I do week in and week out -- let’s face it folks, there aren’t 52 good ideas a year. (*laughter and applause*) There aren’t. Right? ...but also a serious deviation from the spirit of our tradition. The sermon, unlike prayer, has never been considered as one of the supreme things in this world. (*laughter*)

There’s a whole *B’reita* in *P’saḥim* that talks about things that were around, created before creation, that were around before the creation of the world – and there were such things as the *t’shuvah* and *Bet Hamikdash*, and, you know, all of these things – the sermon’s not in there. OK?

If the vast amount of time and energy invested in the search of ideas and devices for preaching – if the fire spent on the altar of oratory were dedicated to the realm of prayer – we would not find it too difficult to convey to others what it means to utter a word in the presence of God. “Preach in order to pray”, he advises. “Preach in order to inspire others to pray. The test of a true sermon is that it can be converted to prayer.” Now there’s an interesting challenge. Will something that you teach, something that you model, get someone to actually not just move three steps forward, but actually move into a different space. Will it be a little piece of hand luggage that he’s going to be able to take with him on that journey and make it a real journey.

And so, a few pages later, Herschel says the following, “What I plead for is the creation of a prayer atmosphere. It’s not created by ceremonies, gimmicks, speeches, but by the example of prayer – by a person who prays. You create that atmosphere, not around you, but within you.” And, if I would add here, people observing you (all of us – that was the general ‘you’, not you here), they know the difference.

“I am a congregant (Heschel writing), and I know from personal experience how different the situation is when the Rabbi is concerned with prayer instead of with how many people attend the service. The difference between a service in which the Rabbi comes prepared to respond to 30 centuries of Jewish experience, and one in which he comes to review the book of the month or the news of the day. It was in the interest of bringing about order and decorum that, in some synagogues, the Rabbi and Cantor decided to occupy a position facing the congregation.” I don’t have an exhaustive survey of this. I suspect we’re in quite a different place statistically from where it was in 1954 when this was published, but maybe not all that different.

“It is quite possible that a re-examination of the whole problem of worship would lead to the conclusion that the innovation was in error. The essence of prayer is not decorum but, rather, an event in the inner life of men (people – it’s 1954). He who prays must turn his eyes down and his heart up. His face is not supposed to be visible. The heart is supposed to be visible. What goes on in the heart is reflected in one’s face. It is embarrassing to be exposed to the sight of the whole congregation in moments when one wishes to be alone with his God. Which, of course, is part of what putting the *talit* over one’s head is about – to create a kind of private space.

I have a little corner in the back – we don’t go up to the *Bima* until the *shaharit* is over on *Shabbat* morning, and one of the problems I have always had with the *Shaharit* Amidah was that, if the ushers who were supposed to kind of keep people from barging in during the *Amidah* so as not to disturb people,

sometimes they are also saying the *Amidah*, people will get by them and someone will come by me and, you know, expect to say “Good *Shabbos*” or whatever, so I’ve found for myself a little inaccessible corner in the back of the synagogue. I have to go through a door – it’s very bizzare – but that’s where I *daven* the *Shaharit*, the *Amidah* for *Shaharit*, because, if I’m seeing, it’s a whole other thing that goes on. A whole other dynamic is created. Why do the *Kohanim* cover their heads with the *talit* during the *N’siat Kapayim* during the *Dukhenen*? It’s because their identity is supposed to be nullified at that moment. Ego edges God out. You’re not supposed to be looking at a person. You’re not supposed to be seeing a human face.

“A Cantor who faces the Holiness in the Ark, rather than the curiosity of people, will realize that his audience is God. He will learn to realize that his task is not to entertain but to represent the People, Israel. He will be carried away into moments in which he will forget the world, ignore the congregation, and be overcome by the awareness of the One in whose presence he stands. The congregation then will hear and sense” – this gets to my saying a few minutes ago that people know the difference – “that the Cantor is not giving a recital, but worshiping God.” And that... “to pray does not mean to listen to a singer” – this is a great phrase coming up – “but to identify one’s self with what is being proclaimed in their name.”

It is not what is being done to me. It is what’s being done, in a sense, for me and with me, in my name that I am connected with – I identify with. And this whole page, I think – it reads as pointedly, I think, and with as much punch, 52 years after it was published as back then – is an enormous challenge to all of us, whether we’re Rabbis or Cantors about this idea of creation of a prayer atmosphere, and what it means to take words and space and human form, human body, human clothes, all the things that are as ordinary and mundane as they can be, and create a different reality and a different consciousness with them. Because it’s only by exiting the normal reality and the normal consciousness that one has – what I’m about to say is intended as a pun – one has even a prayer of connecting with God.

One of the things he goes through, by the way – those of you who are familiar with “Man’s Quest For God” – is what he considers to be the, you know, the “nice try” things about prayer. That people will talk about, well, it helps us connect with the people, Israel. That’s why we teach our kids *t’fila*, Hebrew in our religious schools – because they’ll be able to go into any *shul* anywhere in the world and connect with their fellow Jews. Nothing wrong with that. Right? In fact, there’s something very good about that. And it’s good policy, in that sense, if we’re raising kids to identify with the rest of the Jewish world, which, hopefully, we all want to do. Terrific! That it is also something about finding yourself recalls that either the fallacy or something like that of *solipsism* – you know, the world ends at my nose, or I need to find myself and center myself. We all need to find ourselves and center ourselves, and if the *siddur*, if the words of prayer somehow help us do that –Ma Tov – that’s great.

But all of the things that people have said to try to rationalize prayer, he says, are just kind of fringe benefits of it. It’s not the essence of what *t’fila* is. Unless it has a real theological reality, unless there really is a *Theo tropism*, a turning to God in whom you believe and whom you believe can be turned to, and can be connected with, then it is ultimately not really *t’fila*. It may be all sorts of good things, but it is not that.

Think of how we’ve conditioned generations of Jewish children growing up, many of whom are adults and even grandparents and great-grandparents now. A child comes home from school and talks about – “I am going to raise money for victims of terror in Israel...”

It’s fabulous, right. The kid cares enough to know about it, to think it’s important, to help out other human beings. “I’m going to go to rally for the people in Darfur” – reaching even beyond your community – having that kind of social consciousness. Coming home and saying, “I really want to spend a summer in Israel and learn Hebrew really well.” All of these get very, very positive feedback. “I want to learn as much as I can about Jewish history.” Wonderful, positive feedback we will all give that child, but do you think the child that comes home, or even dares to say, “I really would like to work on my relationship with God” (*laughter*) – what do the parents say at that point? These kinds of conditionings have an effect after a while, when they are repeated over and over again.

OK. Let's look at Page 3. I'm going to leave the left-hand column for you to read. I called it a "Why Synthesis", the importance of prayer being a moment of connection, even if it's just an instant he has established here. He gives two stories there, also from that essay on prayer. One from Sefer Hassidim in the middle ages, which reinforces that idea, but – just so you don't get the idea that he thinks that practice and prayer –that learning *siddur* Hebrew, and that going through the discipline of *kevah* day in and day out is – just so you don't think he believes that's unimportant – he gives you another very important story from the *Rizoner of Rebbe*, which brings us back to the importance of synthesizing both of these things. But you'll read that and evaluate it on your own.

I want to move in...just a moment, after I take this question...to the right-hand column, which is, in fact, from "Heavenly Torah."

Question – cannot distinguish

Yeah. I totally agree and, which is why I think theological talk is very important. People have to be gotten accustomed to thinking that it's ok to think this way, it's ok to struggle with it. Heschel at one point talks about how – I still don't know what God is – but I'm still struggling with it. But, when he talks about creating an atmosphere of prayer and, therefore, creating an atmosphere of devotion, an atmosphere of something being Godly, people have to see it. And people have to see it in a way that they are not only intrigued by it, but feel that maybe they want to try to get some of it. It's like that classic scene in "When Harry Met Sally." You know the scene...in the restaurant she's...right! "I'll have what she's having." You know, the punch line. Right? Those of you who don't know, ask Jack Mendelson. He'll tell you. He knows about these things. I didn't know what the scene meant; he explained it to me. *(laughter)*

But, I don't want you to be thinking about this during the *Musaf Amidah*, but – *comment from the audience* – I know *(laughter)*. People should be looking at you and looking at me – looking at the *Hazzan*, looking at the Rabbi and saying, "I'm not sure how to get it, but I want some of that." But we've got to develop it for ourselves first. Otherwise they won't have...they won't even have a concrete model of what it is that they want. Yeah.

(question from the audience)

Yes, to be a leader and to be, in a sense transparent, and. Therefore – let's say it very bluntly. To be transparent means, in some sense, for your ego to be dispensable for that moment. That is, there are things that are coming through you that are presumably a lot more professional, a lot more musical, a lot more evocative than virtually anyone else in the congregation could do, but it has to be in some sense – if it's too tied to the real ego that is you, it is, for that very reason, lessened. And it's not an easy thing to pull off. But, I think it is possible. Like everything else it takes – you have to be practiced – it's a spiritual discipline you have to be practiced at.

Yes – to someone in audience

Question: "Isn't that the tension, though, because, as you said in Page 2, that the high point in the deal is that we are supposed to be praying on behalf of our congregation. Right? That's what Heschel says. But the question is not necessarily about sublimating our own ego but about the congregation assigning ego to the prayer leader. Because the idea is that people don't necessarily want the Cantor to be praying for them because there's a sense of self-empowerment that we all have in our own congregation."

Gordon Tucker

You have to be careful about praying on behalf of the congregation. What he said was that the congregation has to feel an identity with what is being proclaimed in their name. I would even say, to be represented. That doesn't mean that one is simply ceding the activity of prayer to someone who is simply speaking on my behalf. It's not a *Cyrano D'Bergerac* kind of thing. What it is, is something that is very powerfully expressing what is real inside me, as well, which I now recognize.

You know sometimes you have – let's think of it in very ordinary terms. Everyone here, I'm sure, has had the experience of someone getting up – maybe even at a convention, at a microphone. You're bothered about something, about some resolution on the floor. Someone gets up and says perfectly what was in your mind and in your heart – and you say, "That was it." That doesn't negate your connection to this – doesn't negate your input. It's just that you have now been, in a sense, directed to the real truth of what was inside you. Now that's a very mundane example. Now raise it to the level of the most important and most real and most sublime yearnings that a human being can have to connect to the source which we are all ultimately connected to, for a *Hazzan* or for a Rabbi to be, to understand their role, to (as he puts it) "preach in order to pray", to invert something ... it enhances – if you enhance someone else's *t'fila*, not replace someone else's *t'fila*, not saying to someone, "Ok, I can say Amen to that" ... and, you know, it's going to go up to Heaven on my behalf. But actually for a person to say, "that melody, that conjunction of song and words, is really – I now understand exactly what I was trying to bring to the fore for myself, and you are now part of it." It's as if you said it, it's as if you sang it. Because it's you. That's what it means for a *Hazzan* to be praying on behalf of a community or to be representing a community. I think that's what he's trying to direct us towards. And that requires immediately that the Rabbi, the *Hazzan*, have to feel that 'my ego is really unimportant'. It has to, in effect, be a general ego. It has to be merging with everyone else's and bringing him or her along so that we are, in that sense, all one.

Carol. Question: I don't know about everybody else, but I think I have a pretty good idea across the United States that the average *Shabbat* morning experience is the Bar Mitzvah. And that couldn't be any more vain or ego-filled than completely at the other side of what you're trying to get at. And I know, even as I'm facing the Ark when I lead the congregation in (*Hebrew word*), that I'm standing within a few feet of where the Bar and Bat Mitzvah family is congregation in this special section of my sanctuary, where they all sit. And what is that experience about ... what they're wearing, the *bema* flowers, everything, all the accoutrements of the morning that reek of vanity and ego and everything that is at the opposite end of everything I might be trying to achieve in a *Shabbat* service – which is supposed to be absent of vanity and full of humility. And what am I thinking about but all the distraction that's going on around me, which is so incredibly difficult to absent myself from, and to convey (with my back to the *kahal* – most of the *kahal* is behind me – joy, fervor, connection to God, knowing before whom I stand and all those great idea, which seem to be at polar opposite from the average person in that synagogue – even the regulars. Even the *Shabbat* regulars who are, by rote, mumbling through *Shaharit*, because that's what they do every week – no one is going to this level of humility, absence of ego, connection to the Divine. And it's all wonderful and good, but is this what I'm experiencing on a week-to-week-to-week basis. God I wish it were so. And when you say you just get a moment, sometimes you just get a moment...

Response: Yeah, but that's the good news. Carol: "Thank God."

The good news is...that's exactly what the good news is. An instant, a moment of prayer. And he says it may only happen in that instant, when you get beyond yourself. If you're able to induce that in others for an instant, it means that those people who came in knowing exactly what was going to happen – "why are we going to another Bar Mitzvah...yeah, it's the circuit...it's the 30th one my kids had this year...the flowers are going to be in the middle of the *Bema*...yeah, I know at some point the Rabbi is going to say *Kaddish Shalem*, Page 138...etc. etc. Everything is known in advance; there's nothing more spiritually deadening than predictability. If there's one instant of surprise, that the people who are sitting there, who think they know exactly what's going to happen, in one instant they are just taken by surprise, you've already opened the door. They understand that the next time they go to a synagogue they may be surprised again, in different ways.

Now this is ... you cannot plan a surprise. You can't. You can plan it for someone else but then it won't be a surprise for you and they'll sense that. And so that's the hardest thing. Someone actually gave me this assignment last year. I hated him for it, but I recognized afterwards that there is something very challenging. But even though, in a sense it's impossible. The assignment was, walk across the room and, in walking across the room, surprise yourself. How do you do that? I mean, it doesn't work to say, all right. Halfway across I'm going to suddenly start doing a gig. That's not a surprise. You planned that. What does it mean to surprise yourself at all? I think what it means is, you have to be open, you have to

be sufficient open and sufficiently – holding your own ego sufficiently loosely that things actually can happen and surprise you. Spiritually, in the context we're talking about.

It may not happen every week. But that's ultimately what has to happen, and if it does, I don't think it takes more than an instant to have an impact on people. The problem is, we don't get too many of those instances. One of the most controversial things about the Reform movement in the 19th Century was the idea of planned services. You know. You read the literature and a lot of the railing about what the Reform Temples were doing in Germany – which things were too planned out. That that somehow was undermining the nature of *t'fila*.

You've been waving your hand so I'm going to let you ... but I want at least to give you a little road map to what's on the right here. Yes.

Questioner: I think the Hazzanim need to think of themselves in a very different light. I really believe that, in many ways, we're like the *kohanin* and not the *l'vi'im*. We're not choirs. We oversee what is the replacement for the *korbanot* and that's what our job is. And I think when we perceive ourselves like the *Kohen* and not the Levites, I think we will be performing as prayer leaders in the way that you're talking about. I think it's a change, a transformation of seeing yourself as performing service like the *Kohen*.

Reply: As long as by *K'hunah* you don't mean "following the script of the prescribed rituals.

Questioner: No, but the care and the love that went into overseeing the sacrifice – the prayer is the replacement for that and that's the kind of care and love that we have to give to the prayers.

Reply: Ok, you've given the perfect segue way to this thing about the sanctity of liturgy and from Heavenly Torah, and we've only got a couple of minutes here, so let me tell you exactly what's happening here. This is the one place where he really says things about liturgy in this work, and what he's talking about is the difference of opinion between Rabbi Yishmael and his school and Rabbi Akiva and his school – about what the sacrifices were about when there was a Temple. So, just look at the first couple of lines. "The basic difference in attitude to the sacrificial system may be summarized thus. In the School of Rabbi Yishmael, the view was 'not for my sake do you offer sacrifices, but for your sakes – to satisfy your needs. For my part this is God speaking. I'm pleased that, having given you the commandment, you fulfill my will and I shall reward you.'"

What is the sense you have there? I don't need this specific animal. It's not important to me that it's a male animal and not a female animal; or a female and not a male; that it's a sheep and not a goat; or that it not a ... you know. All of that is really unimportant. What's important to me is that there is this *Theo tropism* that you are turning to Me – you're trying to do My will. That's the school of Rabbi Yishmael. It's sort of about this – the *Luv Dafka* School, or you see on the back (we're not going to read it) on the fourth page – my comment on this chapter in Heavenly Torah talks about the rituals of sacrifice being matters of convention.

But in the School of Rabbi Akiva was "I desire nothing else but the sacrifices. Their sweet savor brings delight to Me." That God is – and you'll see there are *Midrashim* that he gives you further down the page, that further exemplify the difference between these schools – with Rabbi Akiva understanding the verse "*Tsaddik ohel l'sovah nafsho*" – the righteous eats to satisfy his desire (from Proverbs 13:25 – it's three paragraphs from the bottom of the page). Here is a *Midrash* that says, who is the *Tzaddik* – you know, think of *Adir Hu* from the Seder. *Tsaddik Hu* – God is the *Tsaddik*. "*Tsaddik ohel l'sovah nafsho*". God eats the sacrifices to satisfy His *Nefesh*, which mean more literally that, like the breath -- and just very similar to what *N'shamah* really means. So what is it? "The Holy One said to the people Israel, my children you offer me many sacrifices. I derive pleasure only from the odor" – (*sniff*). As the verse reads, "Sweet savor unto Me shall you observe to offer in its due season." That the sacrifices, as they are done, have a kind of sacramental quality to them. They are inherently, intrinsically important. That's the School of Rabbi Akiva.

But the School of Rabbi Yishmael said, remember – they’re really just conventions. They ‘re ways, they’re rituals that kind of give some concrete form to the inner desire to connect – the desire to find out and to do God’s will. But they are not intrinsically important. And the difference now is – just turn the page; we’ll read just one little piece of a paragraph from the commentary that I offered here on that chapter. Let’s look at that last paragraph on the left hand side.

“Through this brilliant and insightful extension of the *Akivan* and *Yishmaelian* division, Heschel here explicates for us why Rabbinic literature exhibits ambivalences on the significance of the *Mitzvot* and of the sacrificial cult specifically. The seemingly trivial debate over whether the golden calf came first or the building of the Tabernacle came first – which these two schools differed on. Did God always have a Tabernacle in mind, and the golden calf just delayed it’s building? Or was the Tabernacle a response to the golden calf, as he saw – hey, these guys are out of control. I better regulate this impulse. But that there wasn’t supposed to be a tabernacle and sacrifices at all, except for the problem of the golden calf.” All of that takes on far-reaching importance and we can sense the ramifications of this ancient Rabbinic debate for contemporary struggles, with the meaning of religious command and ritual.

Indeed, Heschel does one more thing. He makes it clear through his references to later Rabbinic and philosophical literature, that the potentially subversive conventionalist view, the *Yishmaelian* view – that says, eh...none of the rituals, they’re not inherently, intrinsically important. They’re just really symbols of what it is to do God’s will – wasn’t a fluke. Instead, survived and even became the corner stone of *Maimonides* understand of Jewish worship in the Middle Ages. The implication of all of this for such current topics as liturgical reform are easily drawn out. Just think of what *Siddur Sim Shalom* did with the *Korbanot* – transmuted it into the *Midrash* from *Avot*. D’rabbi Natan, Rabbi Yohanan ben Zaaki teaching his students that – well, we don’t have *Korbanot* anymore, we’ll find other ways. “Yesh lanu kaporat aheret” We’ll find other ways to achieve atonement. We’ll find other ways to do God’s will, because the sacrifices themselves were never the point. It was what was accompanying – the thoughts that were accompanying the sacrifices.

For liturgical reform, for changes in that very part of the *Siddur*, the *Korbanot*, the changes involving the *Imahot* – for all sorts of liturgical change and variation, the issue is not so much the efficacy of particular words or particular postures. The ultimate problem is, is there anything behind it, or is it simply an empty currency with nothing that is backing it up.

There is another tale at the end, which I’ll leave for you, but the last thing I will say is something, when I’m talking on this subject, I never fail to point out. I mentioned Shakespeare before and “Hamlet.” It actually is one of the great scenes in that play, where Hamlet, of course, would like to get vengeance, to take vengeance on his uncle who killed his father to become king. And there’s a moment where Hamlet finds his uncle alone and thinks, “maybe I can kill him now and get vengeance.” But he discovers that his uncle is actually down on his knees in prayer. And this is undermining my – something I said before, only in one respect. Hamlet actually is fooled here. He thinks his uncle is really in a state of grace and, therefore, doesn’t want to kill him now because, if he kills him when he’s in a state of grace, he’ll go to Heaven.

But we, the readers, are allowed to listen in on what the uncle is actually saying. And what he’s saying is, “My words fly up, my thoughts remain below. Words without thoughts never to Heaven go.” And that’s the end of the scene. From the outside, the observer sometimes can be fooled -- probably not forever -- and sees all the words being said, and thinks that they’re somehow inherently efficacious, as the School of *Akiva* said. But here the School of Yishmael really had it more right, as Heschel is teaching us. That it’s really ultimately not about the words that are being said, but is there that moment of connection. And if the thoughts remain below and there is no connection with the Divine, then the words ‘never to Heaven go’. And they don’t go into the other places where we would like them to go – into the hearts and souls of the people who are worshipping with us, as well.

So we need to stop here, and I thank you for your attention.

(applause)

Marc Dinkin

Thank you, Rabbi Tucker. You have given us, perhaps for many of us – I put myself in that category – that moment, that unexpected surprise – that charge – that thought that I know I will take back to my synagogue and energy and thought process – which we always can evaluate and re-evaluate. Thank you. *Yasher Koakh*.

And now we will adjourn for lunch.

(applause)

“Vocal Production: Building the Throat – A Unique Process”
Tuesday May 9, 2006 3:45 p.m.
Presenter: Dr. Don Roberts

Rebecca Carmi: (Introduction)

There has been a vocal reformation afoot for a number of years. We have the source of it right here. Hordes of cantors, people from the Metropolitan Opera have been studying with our own "secret weapon". He is a 1970 graduate of Hebrew Union College, a Hazzan, a Ph.D. in Educational Psychology and of late a Rabbi. It is my pleasure to introduce my friend, Hazzan Donald Roberts.

Donald Roberts:

Thank you. There are many familiar faces here this afternoon. It's been a while since I have been involved with the Cantors Assembly but it is good to be here and I am privileged for the invitation to share and illustrate for you what it is that I do.

The first thing is to start off with what I do. I am going to play you clips from two singers that I met at 15 years old. Meredith Hoffmann-Thomson, a dedicated bassoon player, came to study with me at a summer high school college program where I was on faculty. This is where I first heard her head voice and I said to her very innocently, "Meredith, did you ever think of becoming a singer?" She looked at me as if I were crazy. She was planning on becoming a professional bassoon player; these were only elective voice lessons, not something she had to do. Sort of how I met my wife, but that's another story.

That very same summer I had a young tenor come to me, Timothy Fallon, who aspired to be a primary education schoolteacher. I listened to this kid's voice and heard a magnificent "voix mix" falsetto voice with no real physicality to it. I asked him if he had ever considered becoming a singer and he responded by saying that he liked to sing but felt he never had the strength of character to become one.

Both of these students had extraordinary head voices, so I talked them into it and they both started to study with me. What you are about to hear is the result of seven years of a process that continues even today. (Video Clips of Meredith and Timothy)

Rebecca Carmi

To start with Don, I'd like to ask you what you mean when you say that you are not a teacher but a facilitator.

Don Roberts:

Ah... This is an interesting term. Let me just summarize that by saying that the throat is Nature, no different than a heart, set of lungs, bowels, pancreas, or any other anatomical component to human existence.

The voice is the physical fulfillment of that Nature and the singing voice is the poem of Nature. Now, music belongs to the explanatory sciences, which teach us what singing is and not how singing ought to be done. When you listen to those two singers, most of you were getting into the sound of it. What is she doing in terms of her sound? I after many, many years of working on this have decided that it has nothing to do with listening to the singer's sound. It has to do with listening to a singer's mechanics.

If we listen to the mechanics of how people use vowels, we hear if they sing with open vowels, closed vowels and so on. These mechanics are the physiology, the science of the throat. The throat is a science, it is nature and all nature has science attached to it that concerns the human experience. We're always waiting for some new medication for illnesses or genetic engineering, much like replacing parts of a car, ultimately. Science. Mutation. Singing is no different: a result of the Science.

My work is focused only on facilitating that Nature. I am not interested in singing. I never taught Meredith how to sing. Meredith is a singer who studied singing with the best coaches in the United States of America and prepared everything from the beginning to what you heard and even beyond to what she sounds like today. There she was twenty-three and Tim was twenty-four. I met them both at fifteen. In that time Tim received a full scholarship for Julliard and made an opera stage career, singing debuts and God knows what else. This process has destined both of these singers to the stage at the Met in five to seven years. I promised them that. I am not a prophet. I cannot guarantee when it will happen, I can't tell them the exact day it will happen, but I said, "If you do A, B, C, and D and listen to me, you will become a serious singer" and they have listened to me with unflinching devotion.

The next point is *how* did they do this? With telephones. Now, let's get this out of the way because it seems to be the big joke amongst many people in this room, as it should be. If someone told me this fifteen years ago I probably be laughing at them too. However, the question is: Why does Donald teach on the telephone? How does he do that? It is because I am not primarily listening for sounds. I am listening for muscle pulls. This throat science, developed by Dr. Douglas Stanley and his disciples Tom LoMonaco and Ray Smolover, if you know how to get into the science and you know the alchemy, opens up a world to you that is unimaginable.

One more point on this matter. If you are familiar with Freudian language, you know there is an ego and an id. The id is what drives the ego. What I do, has nothing to do with ego but if you tell that to most singers, they'd think you were crazy. I'm not interested in the ego. I want you to get rid of your ego with my work. Save it for the coaches, performances, the applause or anything else you want to. When the audience screams and yells for, you earned the ego. Instead, what I want is the determination of an animal. As Jack Mendelson said in my documentary, "He's like a lion: he sees what he wants, he kills it and he eats it." That's *exactly* what it is in terms of behavior. Singing is behavioral.

Many of us learned how to sing way before we ever phonated. We know our fathers, our mothers, our grandparents, our Rabbis, our Cantors, our people in the synagogues, and on opera stages. Singing is something we've listened to, photographed in our conscious minds and subconsciously retained. When we went to sing our first notes, we duplicated it and then the coaches came in and they corrected it. Period.

Rebecca Carmi:

I want to cut to the heart of the matter and ask: How do you, Don Roberts, build a voice?

Donald Roberts:

How do I teach? Telephone is the big metaphor. On the phone I hear muscle pulls, as I said earlier, better than I do in person. It's almost like an x-ray machine. As long as I can hear those muscle pulls, working interrelated in the way they have to, according to the physiology of the throat, then I can teach you voice. I hear 75-80 percent of the entire voice on the telephone--enough sound to make a determination.

As an example, I met a student here today for the first time. She spoke to me and I was amazed at how similar it was to the telephone. So that answers the question. I'm not here to debate it or not. You heard two of my examples and I have many more sitting in this room.

How do you know it works? Don't believe me. I am not a testimony, you have to go to the people that do it, who pay for it, because something must be going on that they want. I can't make people do it. That's the success of it.

Rebecca Carmi:

In your lessons you refer to things such as the gola, squillo, the colona senora. Can you elaborate on what those terms are and what it is you are working to create.

Donald Roberts:

That's a great question. Those terms are educational terms. Every singer must be aware of their throat just like a person must be aware of their sexual organs. If they're not, they're a fool. I don't care who you study with, what you do, where you are you must get over the hang-ups and be aware of whom you are. If not, you're going to get into trouble. Personally or professionally – that's a fact. The most important thing is you **must** study.

Now the terminology: I believe if you have ever seen a voice lesson of Beniamino Gigli's, Alfredo Kraus', or even Moshe Koussevitzky's you would understand how voice was taught by the master teachers. It wasn't La, La, La, La, La, La, La...sing the song – go to the opera house. No. You build a throat like you build a building. If you can build a building, you can do this. I will show you.

I'm going to give you three examples of a famous operatic phrase with a high B natural. *Vincero*, from *Nessun dorma*, how many are familiar with that? I am going to sing *vincero* the way three famous tenors sang it. The question is, what do you hear? You are probably going to sit there and evaluate my voice, enjoy it and maybe try to analyze it as sound. Forget the sound. Just listen to what I do.

(Don sings examples of three different approaches)

Example Number 1:

Does that version sound familiar to anyone? The only man that ever did it that way was Jussi Björling.

Example Number 2:

Pavarotti

Example Number 3:

Now this is the worst one mechanically. Even though when you heard it, it blew you away. This is Franco Corelli. Now I will explain the differences between the three of them.

Björling was the only tenor that I ever heard, and I've heard thousands of tenors, who ever brought out a closed "e" before he opened his voice at the top. He was tuning his voice to his head voice. The "oo"-vowel the piccolo "oo"-vowel was the key to tuning the voice. The great masters, they knew about this. So anyone think these people just dropped into voice, they need to get their head examined. These were consummate athletes of voice. They built their voices. That was their work. But they didn't tell us much. Singers by nature are very, very selfish and stingy. They don't want to give away their secrets, and rightfully so. If you don't structure this in an orderly fashion, you can destroy a throat. You can't just buy it at the store like bananas. That's not the way it works.

Now, the second example was Pavarotti. Pavarotti in my opinion, and I've heard him live at least sixty times, was the greatest tenor of his generation up to 1983. Then he became a Fellini character for a variety of reasons; health problems, weight problems, and personal problems. Pavarotti pulled his head voice right up just like a rubber band. He kept his head voice astoundingly. He could fake you all and, he has faked you all to this very moment. Trust me he was a phenomenon with a golden throat.

Franco Corelli probably had the greatest vocal cords since Pertile. Look what he did to them though. He blew himself out by bringing too much power into the sound. The sound was astonishing though, and electric to listen to.

Although I didn't show you Richard Tucker, I'll add him. He studied with Paul Althouse, a great teacher of the Garcia Method. That is why Richard literally sang until the day he died. He had two heart attacks and

continued to basically sing exactly the same as he had when he started in 1945. I heard Richard Tucker sing at least eighty times on the stage of the Met and in at least twenty recitals. While you were all doing your thing, I was doing my thing.

Rebecca Carmi:

Don, those of us who know you, we know that you are passionate beyond passionate – obsessed with voice. How did this happen to you? Who were you as a child? How did your relationship with this life long quest for the throat begin?

Donald Roberts:

Now, that's a great question. I never thought I would come towards the last chapters of my life being laughed at like I was in the beginning chapters of my life. But, that's okay. I was not like you probably and you were not like me.

At five years old my father, blessed man, gave me a phonograph with a recording, the London Sampling Recording. I still own that record, which was a revolution at the time. Del Monaco, Simionato, Tebaldi, all the hottest singers of the time were on it and I became obsessed with it. I wanted to be an athletic singer. I related it to sports, like boxing, and felt that those people were sports people. In addition to that, I was a Jewish kid and I loved my synagogue. I became very close with the Cantor and the Rabbi. At eight years old, in that synagogue I said to myself, "this is it, I can be a singer and also be religious." What a profession. That's how it began.

Then I started going to the Met at Eleven. My parents were well off. I was their spoiled, fat little Jewish boy and they bought me subscription seats. Whatever I wanted I got. I wanted boxed seats at the Met and that's what I got. I went to sixteen performances a year and I heard everyone.

In the early part of the sixties I befriended William Weibel, a very good man and the prompter at the Met. He and I became like brothers and he brought me backstage, into the prompter boxes and into rehearsal studios every night to witness the singing firsthand. The more I watched it the more I wanted to do it; but, I didn't have the chutzpah at the time because I wasn't happy with my voice. I continued my singing and studying as a result of that. I studied with maybe seventeen teachers over the years and the greatest voice teacher I ever studied with was a direct result of Bill Weibel. He introduced me to an 84-year-old Giovanni Martinelli and I studied with him for almost a year and a half. He would sit in the corner in his chair and all he talked about were voice vowels, breathing, vowels, breathing, breathing, and more vowels.

I was not able to record those lessons, but I did keep a journal which I subsequently lost and then found five years ago. I found that this journal confirmed so much of what I heard Gigli, Kraus and many others teaching and I started to experimenting along that route.

My voice was very different thirty years ago and I developed my voice to what it is today. That's the truth, like it or not. Everyone has an opinion. I have no opinion of my voice – it is what it is, and it does what it does.

Rebecca Carmi:

Don, would you like at this point to bring up some of your singers?

Donald Roberts:

Yes, Yes, I'd like to bring up some of my cantorial students that I work with here and can illustrate their progress.

Danny Mendelson has been working with me for about six years as a part-time student because he is also a film student. He's gotten caught up in my work and he's spent a lot of hours filming my work with many different kinds of people. We are going to hear him sing *core'ngrato* to show his progress.

(Danny Mendelson Sings)

(Rebecca Carmi Sings)

Wonderful... So these people work very diligently on what they are doing and define their singing strategies and experiences with their throats. When the throat is fully fulfilled it can ultimately do anything. It's in the words, the words are the key; because, the words ARE the vowels – period.

If we can get those vowels in gola (which is your throat), and you can know the anatomy of that gola (which is called the cologna sonora or the colony of sonority. The Colony of Sonority creates the ability to create the power of the head voice muscles. These muscles must be constructed and brought down into your gola from the most closed vowels to the most open ones. When this is built you will be amazed at how your throat comes together.

I do not have a method of singing. As my friend Neil Shicoff has said, my work is an existential science and that's precisely what it is. What do I do? I really can't explain it all but I just know what I do intuitively from my years of dedication to this science.

Now, we will hear Henry Rosenblum, a wonderful colleague, friend and supporter of my work who will be singing for you.

Henry Rosenblum:

Don doesn't need any endorsements. I'm just going to tell you one short thing. We all know our own voices. We know our own limitations and as a result we are typically our own worst critics. Since working with this unusual individual, I've actually come to feel better about the way I sing. That's the greatest endorsement that I can think of. I feel good about what I do.

(Henry Rosenblum Sings B'rosh Hashanah)

Donald Roberts:

Thank you, Henry. I'm going to play one more selection of a person some of you may be familiar with. Netanel Hershtik has been singing with his father Naftali in Jerusalem since he was a little boy. Currently he is the cantor at the Hampton Synagogue in East Hampton. When I met him he had a beautiful head voice with a fully detached falsetto voice. Everything was flipped, separated. He's been studying with me for a year and this is Netanel recently at a concert. I really was blown away by his progress and so was he. So, listen for yourself; draw your own conclusions and I hope you enjoy it.

(Netanel Hershtik recording of Umip'nei Chatoeinu by Brun is played)

For every single one of my students purity of vowels will bring them closer and closer to the ideal perfection of their singing. I don't have to teach anybody about singing. You all have a great concept of singing and in every generation astounding throats still exist. Listening sonically is enjoyable for a concert but listening mechanically is what helps you understand what the masters did and how they did it.

Question and Answer section:

Q: Give us an example of what you do.

A: Here is something if you would like to do this at home. One example: take your falsetto and bring it as

high as you can and then bring it as low as you can without breaking out of your head voice. Doing that over and over will gather and solidify your head voice column. From there it can be extended further and further by putting pressure *on* it and I *would* begin to play with it slowly and surely until those “oo” vowels opened up. From there the “oo” vowel is funneled through all the other vowels, but always start with the “oo” vowel because that is the head voice. If you start with ‘ah’ you are going directly to the chest voice. The ‘ah’ must first be synthesized through the hierarchy of vowel values, All of the vowels must be pulled through the “oo” socket, the “oo” vowel is the key.

Q: What about the lower register in singing?

A: I always avoid the chest voice because it is the devil for the singer, the reason we like it so much is because we, the singer, can feel it and hear it. I’m not saying that we shouldn’t sing with chest. I have a lot of chest in my voice except that it has been mixed with the dominance of the head voice. So when I rise I don’t rise from the chest, I use the chest as nature intended, as the power, what is the head voice? The head *is* the voice. How do I know that? I know because the head voice *has* no limitations. Remember Ima Sumac? She could practically sing off the piano. How did she do that? Did she do it with the chest register? No, she did it with her head voice. We call that vocal resonance the third register, which is not a singing register, but a building register for the head voice. It produces whistle tones, which can be brought all the way down to the base of your shoelaces. If you leave your ego at the door and do this long enough, your entire voice will become structured, it is analogous to the shaft of an elevator. The throat is the shaft, and the head voice, the elevator, once you build that, you start putting in the vowels and purifying them. Why the vowels? Because every vowel has a muscle tension in relationship to head voice and chest voice. Stop seeing it as music- it’s not. The reality is that it is an illusion. It’s alchemy. It is falsetto. Does that peak your interest? It’s pure falsetto and it plays with your head because you all think it is chest voice. The chest voice is powering it, but it is not dominating it. The lower register is increasingly important, but it is *voix mix*, all of it is *voix mix*. Listen to Bjorling sing. He had a teeny voice but it was so loud that he could deafen you.

Q: How do you keep the voice healthy?

A: This is a good question to end with. My wife’s father was a very famous immunologist. He taught me a lot about virology. He always said to me: ‘Donald, viruses always want to attack weak spots in every body. People who are weak or sick usually get viruses first.

Therefore if the throat muscles are weaker than someone else’s, the chances are that you will get more viruses and colds. I haven’t had a cold in probably five or six years and it’s abnormal. The reality is to keep your throat strong and keep yourself in good health. I think if you keep your body in good shape and understand the theory of viruses and weakness then the chances are you will probably keep your vocal health.

Sing from the gola, which consists only of the larynx and the pharynx, and everything funnels through the head voice column from there. The mouth is a negative tension; you must keep it out of the way as if you are a ventriloquist. I have no comments about anyone’s vocal methods, I’m not here to disprove anything. Voice is not about a method. There *are* no methods. They are all the same. You can buy them in books, but you just have to know how to use them. I’m not a technique man. I am a mystic. This is my science, my philosophy, my nature and my life.

Contract Issues
Wednesday May 10, 2006 10:45 a.m.
Presenter: Hazzan Howard Shalowitz

Morton Shames

We're delighted you're here this morning and we're delighted that Cantor Attorney Shalowitz is with us this morning, as well. I often think about what it means to be a Placement Chair -- and to be a Placement Chair for as long as I've been. And I think one of the benefits of it is to be a Placement Chair for all these years, because one brings a history with them of what Placement history was. And, at one time, it was a question whether a *Hazzan* could also be of another interest. In other words, would the position he had outside of being the *Hazzan* -- could he also be in a job situation that related to the *Hazzan*. And, at the time, it would only be something like a teacher. I believe attorney was part of that. And so, our friend here this morning certainly fell into that category. But we were very strict about it at the time. It was very careful. If he had another position, you could not be a *Hazzan* and you certainly couldn't be a *Hazzan* in the Cantors Assembly.

However, we're delighted we do have a history of other attorneys who were also *Hazzanim*. One of the most famous was Charlie Bloch. Did you know him at all, Howard? (*Howard's response, Yeah, yeah.*) And he was a very famous *Hazzan* and an excellent one, as well. And only recently passed away in his mid-90's. He was quite a gentleman. Anyway, this morning we are fortunate in that we have a member of our Assembly who is also a very well known and established attorney, as well as a well-known *Hazzan*.

Hazzan Howard Shalowitz received his undergraduate degree from the University of Pennsylvania. He then received his law degree from Washington University School of Law. He is the past President of the Bar Association of Metro St. Louis and the St. Louis Bar Foundation. He is on the Executive Council of the National Conference of Bar Presidents and serves on the American Bar Association Lawyer Referral and Information Service Committee.

Howard practices law in Missouri and Illinois and has represented synagogues, churches, Rabbis, Cantors, and Priests in contract and employment issues. And, as a side bar, his mother loves that he's a *Hazzan*. (*Laughter*)

Howard Shalowitz: Thank you Morty. Thank you.

Morey: You're very welcome. Let's welcome Howard. (*Applause*)

Howard Shalowitz: Thank you; thank you. Actually the funny story behind that, I told Morty there was a funny story. It was the last day of school at the University of Pennsylvania when everyone goes around and, of course, says, "What are you doing next year? What are you doing next year?" This one says I'm going to med school, this one to business school, this one I'm working, going to law school. So I had applied for law schools and deferred because I wanted to go to the Cantor's Institute at the time. So I wanted to go to Cantor's Institute and study there before going to law school. So people said, "What are you doing next year?" And I said, "I'm going to Cantorial School. I'm going to be a *Hazzan*." And almost, almost in a state of embarrassment, my mother said, "But he's going to be a lawyer, too. He's going to be a lawyer." (*laughter*) So now she says she doesn't remember that story, but I remember it vividly. But she ... the most *nachas* that she gets is the fact that I'm a *Hazzan* more so than that I'm a lawyer.

But anyway, what we're going to talk about today -- and I want to make this a discussion rather than a lecture. What I don't want to do until the very end -- at the very end I don't mind taking personal stories. People will say here's what happened in my situation -- because those things do help -- but if you have a general question as we go along the way, feel free to ask the question. At the end we'll open it up and, unlike some other presenters, I'll be more than happy to give you the free legal advice. And I always tell my clients, the free legal advice is 'you get what you pay for'. Okay? So ... No, I'm more than happy to help you out.

Let's start out – the very first thing, do any of you have the – this thing. That's all right. If you don't, don't worry about it. We're going to go through this. We're going to talk about two different areas. One is the contract and one is an employment issue that eventually either you've dealt with these problems or you're going to deal with the problems. (I think I'm probably talking loud enough. Am I? It's probably reverberating up ... Does it? *(Comment from audience member)* Maybe I should sing instead. *(Laughter)* No; then you'll walk out.

All right, the contract – Negotiating A Contract. It says initial stages. The first thing you should do when you're employed at a synagogue, you're going to renew a contract, you're going to get a contract, you're going to get a new job. The very first thing you do is, you get something in writing because an oral contract isn't worth the paper it's written on. Think of that! Okay?

When a synagogue talks to you and negotiates, tell them to send something to you. It's kind of a waste of time and a waste of your money for you to send something to them because they pretty much have it down pat. I mean, unless they say, "We don't have anything," – if they don't have anything, then... But see kind of where they are and, if they send it to you, they probably have a previous contract from a previous *Hazzan*, and you have (from the Cantors Assembly) there's a standard contract that's put out. All of you should have received one or seen one. Or you could just send them that kind of contract.

But once you send the contract to them, you're bound. That's your offer. And if they accept it, you're in. So I would suggest that when you start negotiating that you take a look at what they're trying to offer, what they propose to offer you, and from there that's at least a starting point. But the first thing you should do when you get a contract is get a what? Get a lawyer. Get someone who knows the law to do it.

And this is not a self-promoting thing. If you, God forbid, have something physically wrong with you, where do you go? To a doctor. If you're sink bursts a pipe, who do you call? A plumber. If something goes wrong with the electric in your house, a light fixture thing, you'd call an electrician. Why in the world do people not call lawyers from the beginning when they have a contract? I don't know. They always call them after the fact and say, "I should have called you – I should have done this before they get deeper and deeper." The best way to prevent something from happening at the very beginning, and make sure you're going to have a happy and long career where you are, call a lawyer. And make sure you have the piece of paper in front of you that is iron clad that makes you happy, that makes the synagogue happy. Ok!

So, the second thing is how do you find a lawyer in that area? I was talking with *Hazzan* Shames before about a different issue, but almost every single city has a lawyer referral information service called LRIS. The American Bar Association has a committee (I serve on that committee) and every Bar Association, every municipality, almost every state has a Bar Association that has a lawyer referral information service. This is how inexpensive it is. You call them. They have lawyers who are qualified in those fields, they carry liability insurance, they're pre-screened, and for a 30-minute consultation you can get a free lawyer. And there's sometimes an administrative fee, maybe \$20 or \$30 that goes back to the Bar Association for that referral. This is in any area. So if you have a worker's comp issue, if you have an issue as a Cantor, I doubt there're going to be many lawyers out there who say, "Yes, I deal in contracts dealing with *Hazzanim*." But they deal with entertainment law and, I hate to put us all in that category, but it's the category of entertainers.

By the way, as a sidebar for when you go on cruise ships. If you ever want to be a *Hazzan* on a cruise ship, you call the Entertainment Department of the cruise ship. That's where they list the Priests and the Cantors and Rabbis. *(Laughter)* I don't know why. *(Question from audience member)* LRIS, Lawyer Referral and Information Service. And wherever you live, whatever Bar Association – if you're in Minneapolis, that's (what county is that? They're going to kill me...) Anyway, in Pittsburgh it's Allegheny County. The Allegheny County Bar Association has one. Santa Cruz Bar Association in Phoenix, they have one. The state Bars have it; so no matter where you are, you're going to have a Bar Association and, within those, there's a Lawyer Referral Information Service. And you tell them, "I'm a clergyman. I've got a contract and I need someone to look over the contract and discuss the issues."

I'm one of the... a few lawyers, or many lawyers who deal in these things. So, if you have any questions, at the end I'll give you my e-mail address just for simple issues, and I can either refer you to someone, I could do it, or whatever. But you need to have a lawyer. I can't stress this enough.

The second reason being that, aside from that, you're probably not qualified to look at these contracts and do them – you don't want anybody (even if you are qualified). Because they say a lawyer who represents himself has a fool for a client. You never represent yourself because you get emotionally involved. Plus, they won't have as much respect for you. This way, say, "My lawyer will deal with it." And if your lawyer is ah (I can't use the word because we're recording this session), but he or she is a not so nice person, they're not going to take it out on you. They'll say, "You know, your lawyer really played hard ball with us." And you'll say well hey, you know, that's business. But if you go in there and do it, they're never going to forget that. They're going to say this is the way this person dealt with us, and they didn't return our calls immediately – let the lawyer be the one to blame. We get blamed for everything, so you might as well let us get blamed for this. That's why you pay the lawyer.

The next issue is the lawyer negotiation and review of contract – we talked about that. And, yes, yes...

(Recognizes female audience member): A third reason why you should always have a lawyer is, at least in my congregation, 90% of the people on the Board are lawyers. They're lawyers so why should I try to go up against them? It's crazy!

Howard Shalowitz: Yeah. Aside from unequal bargaining power, you don't want to do it even if *(comments from female speaker – They know what they're doing and I don't.)* Right, right! Steve...

(Steve – audience member): A lawyer versus an accountant.

Howard Shalowitz: Great point, and we're going to get to that later with tax issues. You'll have to have these things reviewed before you sign them. Talk to a tax lawyer or your accountant. Those issues are a little bit more difficult for me to answer because all I know about taxes is I pay them. And you should too. No, I know a little bit more about them, but everyone's situation with taxes is different. I mean you go down the row here and no two are going to be the same. So you have to go to an accountant also. But, generally, the issues dealing with contracts and with employment issues and with lawyers across the board is generally going to be the same. So when we talk about things like parsonage and tax issues and reimbursements and all that – those are issues you have to discuss with your own accountant. So, thank you for mentioning that. Who else had a question?

(Audience member): We I just wanted to make a comment on another thing about having a lawyer represent you. There is a certain terminology and a certain perception of communication that, from my own experience, where you might be thinking the same thing but I cannot communicate it in the same way that a lawyer can communicate it to other lawyers so that they really understand the point.

Howard Shalowitz: Right, cause we get paid by the word. *(Laughs)* Actually if you look at the contract by the Cantors Assembly, it's very good. It's worded very well. It's not – they don't use convoluted terms or anything. It's done very well. But you're right. The lingo is different because you might want to say something about severance but you're not really talking about severance, you're talking about disability. You might get some, terms confused.

(Female audience member): At the previous convention, I think it was last year, in a similar session, a person did say, "Oh, you should negotiate your own contract because then the people will respect you because you were strong enough to negotiate your own contract." But your advice is much better.

Howard Shalowitz: It's the total opposite. Yeah. I don't know who it was last year, but you don't – you never fight your own cause.

(Male audience member): I hear you saying ... you're not necessarily saying, "Have a lawyer negotiate your contract." You're saying, "When you get a contract in hand, make sure a lawyer goes over it and does the fine tuning." Are you also saying that you get a lawyer to do all your negotiation for you? Cause you're talking about two different things.

Howard Shalowitz: Ok. Right, they are two different things. All right. First thing is, if you get a contract, or you go over a contract, or you have a lawyer go over it – that's a given. I don't know anyone who wouldn't. All right. You have the lawyer go over it, all the provision in the contract. If you're happy with it, you're finished. You sign it and you're done. Right? If there are some other issues – let's say you're already employed – and that's what's coming down the road here for the employment issues. Or you're negotiating a contract and you can't get to the final solution of having a signed contract, and you have to get a lawyer involved for that final negotiation. You get a lawyer for the final negotiation. So it's both.

So the initial step is, get one to review it. If you're happy with it and things go smoothing – and most of them do, actually – then you sign off on the dotted line. They don't even know you had a lawyer and then you're finished. If you can't get to that point and you're going to debate how much of a severance, what are the terms of it, lifetime contract versus 20 years, etc., and you go back and forth on major issues – what house you're going to live in. Then you get a lawyer to do it. Don't start negotiating with the synagogue on your own, for a variety of reasons. They will have more respect for you if you get someone else and the unequal bargaining power we were talking about.

(Male audience member): Sometimes they don't want to deal with someone's lawyer.

Howard Shalowitz: That actually we're going to talk about, too. That actually is a telltale sign of things to come, okay. That and things like, 'we can't give you a raise because that means you're going to be making more than our Rabbi.' You say, yeah, but I've been here 20 years and he's been here 2 years. And because they think the Rabbi is ... that's a telltale sign of things to come. There are certain issues and, actually, that's next. How to get out of one before they get you.

If they say to you, you know, we don't deal with terms why don't the two of us just talk. Say, "You know what, I just never made it a practice." And never put it on yourself. You can always say, "The Cantors Assembly recommends..." Because it's true. Right, Right. My spouse's, my kids', my cousin's brother's Bubby Zaddy was a lawyer and he once told me that ...whatever.

Put it on someone else. Don't say, "It's not me. I'm going to go get a lawyer." Explain to them, and they'll have more respect for you. That this is what the Cantors Assembly, United Synagogue, this the standard practice among all *Hazzanim*. "I would love to negotiate with you. I would love to talk to you directly because I really would like to have a job here, and I'm sure you would like to have me here, but this is just the way that's it's done in the business – and it's a business." It's a profession, it's a love, it's a calling but it's a business.

(Female audience member): If you've been negotiating with the same congregation for other contracts and you're up for a new one and you've done it yourself, how can you, at that point, bring in someone when you haven't done it before and not make them nervous about it?

Howard Shalowitz: If there's an issue – I mean, if you're going to get a raise in salary and parsonage things and, of course, you've got to talk to an accountant and talk to a lawyer, you do that behind the scenes. They don't need to know you have a lawyer. But if there's a bone of contention dealing with parsonage, you say, "You know what, this is beyond my comprehension, dealing with all these convoluted tax issues...." Anybody get this? Minister...you all got this, right? All right. Honesty – cause I'll be honest with you. How many of you have read this. *(Few responses from audience)* Really! *Mazal Tov!* *(Laughter)*

Now, for those people who read it, how many of you understand it? *(More laughter)* It's very good, but it really is geared for a lot of information for laymen and a lot of information for accountants. What's it say, 'inform whatever, in line, you know, Roman numeral 7.B you put in...' I don't need to know that. You give it to your accountant. But there is great, great information in here. You'll be able to glean something out of here. *(Comment from audience member – could not understand)* Yeah and sometimes they don't. I mean sometimes they don't know and sometimes they don't need it. But it's really a great resource.

Once you've read it once, if it's been a few years, read it again. Things have changed. There's a famous case from the 1960's with Cantor Salkov that's actually mentioned in here. But the question is, if you've already been dealing with a congregation for five, six, seven years and you have a new contract coming up, how do you all of a sudden bring a lawyer in. It depends on what it's for. If it's for something that you need to have the help of a lawyer to negotiate a major provision of the contract, bring a lawyer in. And you say, "Listen, you know, things are moving along (...whatever...) I had someone review it, just as I did six or seven years ago." You know, let them know there was someone involved six or seven years ago that they might not have known about. "Would you be amenable to meeting with that person and with me." You all just sit down. That's all.

That stuff you see on TV is – like LA Law, you have a client come in on Monday, you take depositions on Tuesday, you have the trial on Wednesday, and then on Thursday you collect a check. Right? No, it's not like that. If only...if only!

(Female audience member): Do you recommend sitting in on a session with a lawyer and not just leaving it to the lawyer?

Howard Shalowitz: Absolutely! And have...that's also another point. Not only should you be there – I mean when you're getting close to "yes". All right, there's a book called *Getting to Yes* (it's actually a pretty good book) that, when you get to almost there, you absolutely should be there. Otherwise, they're going to say something to the lawyer and they might be saying something in a lingo that the lawyer doesn't understand. The lawyer may not be Jewish, may be Jewish and never go to *Shul*, or whatever, and they might say something about *davening musaf* and the lawyer thinks that's cooking a meal after *Shabbos* or something. Who knows. You have to be there to understand the lingo and just so that you make sure you're on the right tract.

The same thing goes for them, that whoever is in there for the synagogue, make sure that the person you're talking to has the authority of the synagogue to bind you in that contract – ok, to bind the synagogue in the contract. Because I've dealt with situations where the President of a congregation says you're going to be hired for 'x' terms (either a holiday job or for a year or two years), you're going to be hired and we're going to take it to the Board. I talked to the Ritual Committee person, we'll send you a contract, and all of sudden you find out it has to go to their Executive Committee. And the President of the congregation or whoever was head of the Ritual Committee didn't have the authority to bind the congregation to the contract. And the Ritual Committee guy sends you a letter, and then you find out that letter is worth nothing, because it has to be the President of the congregation after resolution of the Board. So, whenever you have something – and actually make sure – I don't think it's in the Cantors Assembly Contract – that says...I mean it has a Secretary of the Congregation and by the President and all that, so that's good enough. But generally there's a line that says "The undersigned President of the Congregation has authority to bind the congregation to this Contract." Something like that.

So generally, make sure that all the parties are there. You all sign off. You all shake hands. You hug, you kiss, you sing *Hava'nagila* and you walk away.

So, next part – What to Include in the Contract. The contract that the Cantors Assembly puts out is, as I mention, very good actually. Parsonage and other tax consequences – how many of you deal with parsonage? Either you receive it -- you get it somehow, OK. So you generally know how it works. The general overview of parsonage depends on if you own your own home, if it's a *Shul's* home; how much you could write off, up to what percentage of your income for normal housing expenses. So if there's gas, there's electric – there are certain things. If you like dogs and you have 10 dogs, and you say they're guard dogs, that's not parsonage. OK? (Laughter)

I talked to my accountant about this. I said, I have a dog at home and I have an office in my house. Can I write off the dog for all the expenses? You know she's 16 ½. Her medical expenses are getting up there. So, I said could I write off the dog, teasing, as a guard dog. He said, yeah, and you can discuss that with all of your friends who are behind bars with you. (Laughter) There are certain things you just

can't do. And there are certain things – it's a gray area, but chances are you probably shouldn't try to do it.

But for the most part you know what parsonage is and you know about how much you could write off. Those are issues that you should talk to an accountant about. Absolutely! And for the most part the synagogue knows about it and how to deal with it and your accountant should know.

Other Tax Consequences -- Are you an independent contractor or are you an employee of the *Shul*; Social Security matching; do you pay self-employment tax; who does the pension; etc. – and we'll talk about pension in a second. Those are all issues, again, for accountants. Have any of you faced any issues dealing with parsonage questions or about tax consequences. Reimbursements to synagogues – reimbursements is a big issue because, when you go out of town or in town on some sort of conference that they reimburse you, is that part of you salary? In which case, you declare it and later you write it off as an expense for taxes, or do you pay it and they pay back immediately?

(Audience question): Wouldn't the accountants need to balance that?

Howard Shalowitz: Yeah. And that's more of something that you have to discuss with your accountant. It generally comes out about the same way. I mean, you either put it in as your income and you pay tax, but then you write it off your expense – or you leave it out of all of that and then you just submit it to the synagogue. But sometimes synagogues give you more than what your actual expenses are. You know, there's car allowance, other types of allowances. They'll give you something to go to a convention. Instead of going to a convention for four days you only go for three, so the extra money, if you pocket it, is that considered income? Not if you spend it on massages here at the spa (*Laughter*) cause you got to relax before you sing. Right?

(Audience comment): Well, if it comes from the same hotel bill, it's the hotel bill.

Howard Shalowitz: Right...well, but if you start getting audited, it's a problem. So keep everything – never cheat Uncle Sam, never cheat your *Shul*. You'll go to sleep at night and you'll never have to worry about it.

(Audience member): You know, when you mentioned parsonage before, you brought up utilities and things like that. Was that a slip?

Howard Shalowitz: No, there's some that you can...anything, well let's say....

(Audience member): My understanding was that the law changed – that we no longer could take utilities.

(Another audience member): Since when?

Howard Shalowitz: I'm going to give you the advice that almost every lawyer will give you. Consult an accountant. It's actually in here, dealing with that, and I'm pretty sure that the Minister's Guide for 2005, at least, said that things like electric, gas, all sorts of utilities, that you can. But check with an accountant. You and I will go afterwards. Whatever the book says. I'm going to go by what the book says.

(Audience member): I thought the law changed.

Howard Shalowitz: Actually it got a little bit more liberal, for some things for what you can and can't do for taxes. But there is this whole thing – I will tell you this, down the road beware, because this whole separation of church and State – the people who are afforded things are clergy. And some say it's not really a good separation of church and State. Why are clergy, why are ministers and Rabbi and Priests – why are they allowed to write off a home (you're gonna have to live somewhere anyway), why are they allowed to write off utilities and other expenses of a house? Well, used to be in the olden days – the way olden days – they lived in the residence, the rectory, the parsonage was right there. Now, when you live 10 miles away in a home, it's a whole different ball game, but they're still allowing it. There are going to

be some test cases, I guarantee you, down the road, testing the separation of church and State to get rid of parsonage. It's coming, I'm telling you.

(Allen): Apparently there's a movement for executive directors of synagogues to be able to claim parsonage.

Howard Shalowitz: Right. Yeah, there is something with that – that executive directors (as a clergy) – and I think there was a recent case about this that says executive directors are not...

(Allen): Also the JAA is challenging that. They want the educational directors...

Howard Shalowitz: Right. Yeah, they're trying to expand it and that generally isn't going to happen. What did happen, as far as they went, was have a deacon of a church. The deacon is the highest lay person of a church – not a clergy – and some have allowed that the deacon can be included in that because of all the pastoral duties the deacon has.

(Female audience member): I'm just a little confused because I think that the line slipped. You said, what to include in a contract and then we were off and sort of running on parsonage and Social Security and employment tax.

Howard Shalowitz: Oh, we're finished with what to include in contract?

(Female audience member): I just want to understand if we're still on what to include in a contract.

Howard Shalowitz: All right, here we go.

(Female audience member): We haven't talked at all about...

Howard Shalowitz: Oh no, no, no! We've got a whole list here. Ok, yeah, yeah. So parsonage and other tax consequences – those are the things we're going to pass off to an accountant.

Vacation – always have something dealing with vacation in there. How many terms, how many weeks – again refer to the Cantors Assembly model contract. But for vacation time, it varies. It depends how long you're been there; it depends on the needs of the congregation. You're not going to schedule vacation during Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur, I hope. So it's always mutually acceptable between the Cantor and the congregation. Generally people don't run into those problems. Even if it's us to you and you want to schedule a vacation sometime around let's say Thanksgiving, but there's a Bar Mitzvah of the President's son – don't do that. You're just slicing your own throat. So, I mean, use some *seichl* here when you take your vacation. But do put it in writing and do give it to the Executive Director or the head of the congregation well in advance of when you want to have the vacation. Give the dates I'm going to be leaving five months from now from this and this – and you give it to them and you make sure it's in your employment file, or whatever. So that a week before your vacation when they say, "Oh, you can't go." You tell them that you gave them that notice.

Are there any questions about vacations or how much vacation. Minimum one week, maximum 52.
(Laughter)

(Female audience member): Not about how much, but how it's expressed. My congregation seems to like days. I think it's an advantage because then I don't count my day off as an extra. They let me say 20 days in a year.

Howard Shalowitz: Yeah, that's a good point. Instead of weeks – because if you take off whatever it is. If you take off let's say Mondays and Tuesdays, or you take off just Wednesdays, or some congregations just need a *Hazzan* on the weekends, and you say that's a week, what constitutes a week. Does that mean you're allowed seven *Shabbosim* off? Or you allowed just one week of one *Shabbos*? So, it's a good idea... It's what

(Audience member says something the mike didn't pick up)

Howard Shalowitz: Absolutely. And that's why you should get a lawyer to put these things in. If you have a workweek that constitutes five days, then put it how many days – how many work days you have off in your contract. So if you're off a Monday, Tuesday, and a Wednesday to go out of town, that doesn't count as 3 days, it counts as one day. So make sure that you put that in there.

Sometimes you'll put in there or congregations will that they can't be consecutive, you can't take more than two consecutive weeks. Let's say with exception of a sabbatical or something pre-approved by the Board, or whatever. And you don't want to take more than that because, if you take 3 weeks off or you take 4 weeks off of a full-time thing, not only are you going to come back to a ton of work when you get back with teaching, but... If a congregation sees that Haim Yankle davened musaf and he was pretty good and Susie Schwartz over here davened shahrit and she was pretty good, what's going to go through their mind? Why do we need a Hazzan? They've been gone for a month and we've worked out fine here. So take as little vacation in chunks as you can – a week here, two weeks there. But you generally shouldn't take a whole month.

(*Female audience member*): I grew up with Cantor Avery and I don't ever remember him taking time off, I swear. He was there every single *Shabbat*.

Howard Shalowitz: And he's a great guy.

(*Female audience member*): That's a model I admire.

Howard Shalowitz: Yeah and you show your fact, and that's what they want.

(*Male audience member*): If you're going to put vacation in then the question you also need to talk about is roll-over. I have yet to take all the vacation that's in my contract.

Howard Shalowitz: Right. Some contracts have "use it or lose it." That you either use it by the end of the fiscal year, by the calendar year, or you lose it. The obvious advantage to the *Hazzanim* is that it rolls over. The best thing that you would have is that it all rolls over to the following year and you could keep rolling and rolling and rolling your vacation. So if you're there 10 years and you don't take a vacation, you have a lot of vacation time coming up or compensation.

(*Female audience member*): What if you don't call it vacation – you call it sabbatical?

Howard Shalowitz: That's a whole other issue. You might be entitled to sabbatical also. But if you don't take it and congregations, to their advantage, they probably want use it or lose it. You either take the vacation or you're going to lose it. As a good compromise what they'll say is, whatever vacation you have not take this year, half of that amount of time will be rolled over. And that's usually a good compromise for the congregation. But the way to maximize it is to do roll it over and keep rolling it over.

(*Male audience member*): I'm dealing with, I get a day off on Wednesday and I'm noticing that every other month the Board meeting is on Wednesday night and funerals and *Shivas*. This is the first year I went back and said, "Gentlemen, I'm looking for compensation for those days off." And we're in negotiation now whether it in the form of a contract or it's just an understanding with the President and Executive Committee that we're not going to – that this is your official leave. But if there's a Tuesday where you have a light load and you want to take off, we're not going to. You know, our policy will be, we're not going to be checking on you. That's what's being basically talked about. That's another concern, that if you have a day off, you have a day off.

Howard Shalowitz: Just leave. Turn off your phone and go. Have it say your thing, “This is *Hazzan* so and so. Today is whatever. I will be out of the office. I will be returning all phone calls tomorrow.” But always have a back-up plan. God forbid someone dies and you missed it and such.

(Male audience member): I found two things. First, on a number of occasions, I’ve found that congregations tend to be (or my congregations have tended to be) very generous with giving me vacation time. Because it’s something that, in a negotiation situation, they can offer freely and have it seem that they view it as an extra benefit and they’re being incredibly generous. Basically, it doesn’t cost them anything. They’ll happily give me an extra two weeks of vacation but, of course, I have to cover all the *(could not understand because of background noise)* and all the lessons. But they feel really good about themselves because they’ve offered me all of this extra time.

Howard Shalowitz: Plus, you know what else it is for the congregational benefit. You always have to put it in the light most favorable to them, because you don’t want to go in saying, “I want vacation. What are my benefits?” It’s like going into a contract and saying, “Yeah, I’d love to have the job. Now tell me, what are my health things and my vacation....” They don’t want to hear that.

The way it’s phrased, and a good negotiator will do this for you, is you say, “You don’t want your *Hazzan* being burned out. There are too many *Hazzanim* being burned out now. They work an entire year and they say, you know what, this place isn’t for me. Maybe this profession isn’t for me. You need to keep *Hazzanim* happy.” In Europe, you know, they give weeks and weeks, months, of vacation that are mandatory. You have to take your vacation just to get out. It’s a growth process; it keeps you happy; it gets you out of town for a little bit. So you tell the congregation that a vacation is something for the congregation’s benefit. And that’s the way you couch that.

(Male Audience Member): The other thing that I worry about in our situation is that I’ve always put some sort of a flex time or a comp time clause in my contract that specifically says that my presence is not required if my duties don’t demand it. So that if, for example, for one semester – the way the soccer season worked out – I’m not going to have a whole lot of kids on Monday, then, all right you’ll see me for *minyan*. But when soccer season is over and those kids start playing flag football and they’re all playing on Monday, then I’ll take on Tuesdays now. That I can flip flop the schedule or I can take an extended lunch. And as long as it’s clearly stated and clearly agreed and as long as my responsibilities are fulfilled, that there is no requirement to be there to cover other duties like pastoral things and things like that, because my presence is not necessarily required in the building.

Howard Shalowitz: And as a sub-set, by the way, to all of this, whenever you do things that are extra-curricular but are still within the realm of *Hazzanos* (you know weddings, Bar Mitzvah showing, whatever it might be -- something outside of the synagogue that isn’t part of your duty necessarily), send a confirmation letter. “Dear So and So, Mazal Tov on the up-coming wedding. This is to confirm that I will be officiating. I’m supposed to show up at such and such time and...” Because people call you and they get nervous. Will the Cantor be there? Then they call you 20 times. You send a letter, they’ll leave you alone. Also, it’s to confirm they want you, because some of the groom’s family might call you and bride’s family didn’t talk to them, and they went and hired another *Hazzan*. Send letters. It doesn’t cost that much and the time saving is incredible, just to send a confirmation letter. And “*Mazal Tov* once again, I’ll see you there...da-da-da-da-da.”

By the way, before we go on, I would be remiss if I didn’t mention one attorney in particular who has been a great, great asset to the Cantor’s Assembly, and that’s Herb Garten. And I spoke to Herb last week. He sends his regards to everybody and you know that his son had passed away. Herb is just a great, great man and I see him at the ABA meetings all the time. And he’s a wealth of knowledge about Cantors and about Cantorial contracts, so I’d be remiss if I didn’t mention him. Herb Garten. Then he’ll refer you to me. *(Laughter)* No, he’s a great guy, he really is, and he’s very – he’s in Baltimore. But they have airplanes.

(Comment from audience member – could not hear)

Howard Shalowitz: I don't know. Is Jeff practicing still. Is he still practicing – Jeff Nadel? I think he is, yeah. (*Audience member confirms he is still practicing.*)

(*Male audience member*): How are you supposed to handle if you have to go away for a family affair, a Bar Mitzvah or wedding? They consider this as a week vacation? Depends on...

Howard Shalowitz: It's whatever you deal with you congregation. I mean a lot of these things – I will say this. There are some agreements that you have to deal. It's like the Constitution. These are the guidelines, these are the hard and steadfast rules. But the other things that come up from time to time, if you're a *mentch* and your Rabbi's a *mentch* and the congregation is full of *mentchen* on the Board, you're not going to have a problem. But, you know, how they deal with these specific problems is up to the congregation. I'll have one more and then we'll keep going down.

(*Male audience member*): I hope I'm not getting off the subject but I was just thinking about something you said, David, about flex time and that if you're working more one afternoon then you take an extra time at lunch. Is your congregation really watching hour by hour like that? Are you punching a time clock?

(*David*): No, of course not. But I also know that it's important for me to cover my tracks in case at some point in the future there's a Board member or a President or somebody like that who wants to set me up to drop me. If I have, number one, a traditional way of doing things – I've always done it this way so the precedent is on my side. And, especially if I have a clause in my contract that says it's ok, that's one less thing they can use against me if they want to drop me.

Howard Shalowitz: So, next we've kind of covered vacation. Pension -- Pension plans, again, talk to an accountant about it. There are various ways of dealing with pensions. Are you an independent contractor? are you an employee? Depends on a lot of things. If you want to be deemed an employee, there's a kind of four-five-step process. Whose direction are you under; are you totally independent; are you allowed to work in other places; the manner of dress that you have; do they dictate that in some employment areas? You know, if you have something that says, Tell-a-Tune Singing Telegrams and they direct you to go somewhere and you're not free to work anywhere else and you're working there 40 hours a week. Generally you're an employee.

If, on the other hand, you go to a one-time gig and you're allowed to work somewhere else. It's when Steve walks in, it happens. People start warming up. You bring sunshine into the room and everything.

(*Comment from Steve in background*)

Howard Shalowitz: It's what happens when lawyers start talking. It's like all the hot air. You know. So, anyway, deal with that with your accountant as to whether you're an independent contractor or whether you're an employee. Dealing with pensions, there are KEO plans, there are set plans, money purchase plans, profit sharing plans, how much you can contribute. I will tell you this. As much as you can contribute, contribute it, because it's tax deferred, it's savings down the road. You don't have to pay the taxes on it now. Do as much as you can with whatever works out the best for you.

But if you can contribute let's say \$15,000 to your money purchase plan or \$10,000 to a profit-sharing plan or vice versa (I forget which one's the larger one), do it – whatever the maximum amount you can do that year.

(*Male audience member*): If you have in your package money designated in various places and, when you find that you don't use money from a given area or all of it, is it simple enough to just be able to switch that? And, let's say, contribute to your pension that way? Generally the congregation isn't interested in the breakdown, they're interested in the total package bottom number that's going to impact them. So, if you designated \$6,000 for convention in a 3-year situation and you use \$4,000 – as long as your plan allows it. Is it easy enough to just move that to your pension rather than...?

Howard Shalowitz: It depends on what kind of pension. If you have a SEP – self-employment plan; if you have a KEO plan; if you have a money purchase. Money purchase and the profit-sharing plans, there's a

formula that's used up to a maximum amount. If you're already got the maximum, you can't. If it's an IRA where there's a – remember the IRA's used to have \$2,000 maximum. If you've already achieved that amount, then you can't. It depends on what plan you have.

(Male audience member): Let's take one step back, then.

Howard Shalowitz: You take that money, the extra money, you mean.

(Male audience member): Say money's been allotted in a certain line, but that's part of a total figure that they've agreed to pay you. Is there flexibility to be able to move that somewhere else? You do have that right to be able to...?

Howard Shalowitz: Yeah. The money...if you spend \$4000 on convention and they're given you \$6000 for convention, the extra \$2000 generally (generally, talk to your accountant) will be deemed extra income. You have to. You can't say, well it's convention expense when you never spent it. It's income. Or, what you could do – which many *Hazzanim* do, put it in the Cantor's Discretionary Fund, which is through the synagogue. You could use their tax ID number if it's a 501, if it's tax exempt. If it's a charitable organization 501c3, then you put it in there. People can get a tax write-off by putting it in Discretionary Funds if it's a 501c3. And then you use that money.

(Male audience member): Discretionary funds are very questionable in terms of congregations and how they want to use that money. If you're getting it through the synagogue, I mean gratuities, etc., it's very hard to use it outside of how they specify you are to use it. And once you retire (I use that as a personal example), I had quite a bit in my discretionary funds but once I retired it was left at the synagogue. I was not able to take it along with me.

Howard Shalowitz: Yeah. It depends on whose control it's under. If it's under your control, if it's money that was left over from something you had earned and you take that, really the way you're supposed to do it is you declare that \$2000 on your taxes. If you want to say, I put it in a 501c3 (a charitable thing), then you write it off as a charity. But you're right about who controls the discretionary fund. What I would say is, if you have a lot of it, and it's under the discretion of the congregation, if they want to give you a nice parting gift at the end, but then is that taxable? And the answer is yeah, it probably is taxable, depending on how much it is. If it's a gift here or a gift there... but if they're going to buy you a Cadillac that *(comment from audience – that's in-discretionary)* – yeah, you're right. That's in discretionary. *(Laughter)* That you're going to be talking to Bubba about behind bars for 7 or 8 years.

(Male audience member): What I'm concerned about – what I understood is that you have a package and you have \$2000 left in your package, the choices you have – if the congregation will allow you to roll it over to recover some of the benefits in the next year. That's a possibility and that's legitimate.

Howard Shalowitz: Right!

(Male audience member continues): You also can get that as a bulk sum, but then it becomes taxed as salary.

Howard Shalowitz: Exactly!

(Male audience member continues): The other this is you can move it to another line item, as long as it's within the benefits. But if you put it in your discretionary fund, that's no longer your money.

Howard Shalowitz: Right!

(Male audience member continues): You could maybe use it for education or convention or pulpit *(could not understand)* congregation, but it's not money that you could use at its face value.

Howard Shalowitz: Correct! Right! But ask the congregation if you can do that because, if they designate \$8000 for convention and you're not using \$8000 for convention – you're using \$6000. You can't just

pocket the money and secretly put it wherever you want to put it. You tell them what you're doing and if you say you want to put it in the discretionary fund because you want to take the kids bowling on Sunday after Hebrew school, that's fine. But you can't use it for your benefit.

(Male audience member): You can't go out and buy flowers for your *(couldn't understand word)*.

Howard Shalowitz: Exactly! Exactly!

(Female audience member): If one has all those sources of money, like convention budget – I have a book and music purchasing budget and convention budget up to a certain amount per contract year (not to be rolled over). So this means that if I don't use it, I lose it.

Howard Shalowitz: Right!

(Female audience member continues): So now if I sign up for this convention and another convention and there's \$200 left over, I can't use that if I can't use it for convention. Unless I can get them to designate that that full pile of money is for me to use in a more flexible fashion?

Howard Shalowitz: Right! What you should do, actually – my suggestion is this. It's kind of a double-edged sword. It's like what Congress does. If you don't spend what's allotted, they're going to cut you the next year. OK? So if they allow \$1500 for convention and you're only spending \$800, the next year (the next contract term), they're going to say we'll only give you \$800 cause you only spent \$800. So that's what Congress does. You know, you allot a million dollars, you spend 1.2 and then they give you 1.4 the next year. But, on the flip side, if you come back and say you allotted \$1500 but we only spent \$1200 – I saved the *Shul* \$300. Next time around I'd like to take that extra \$300 and put it toward 'x' – or if you split the difference and the extra \$150 you give to me as a perk or bonus, whatever. So I don't know if that answers your question or not.

I'll tell you, let me go through this and then we'll catch some of these questions at the end. That's pension.

Termination -- Termination, again, is contained in the document in the contract. There are ways of termination. Obviously, is it up to the Cantor, up to the congregation? Usually this is what's called "Specific Performance", that you can never ask someone to provide a service or enforce someone standing there and doing it. If I hire you to paint a painting for me and I say I'll give you \$1000 and then you decide you're not going to, no court is going to say I'm going to force you to sit there and paint that painting for 'me'. But what they do is, they give you money damages. So no one is going to force you to stay in the synagogue. If you want out chances are you'll get out. There are termination ways to get out, despite the fact that you have a contract for a certain number of years. Are you liable on it? Yeah, if the day before *Rosh Hashanah* comes and you say, "You know what, I want to get out of here. I want to leave", and you walk off. And don't laugh... it's happened! And then they have to last minute go hire someone for \$15,000 cause that's the only person they can find, and they did what's called 'mitigate their damages'.

They're not just going out and hiring, converting Pavarotti and then hiring him. They would try to find somebody and the only one left is \$15,000, you might be on the hook for that \$15,000. So, you know, there are certain things with termination – you give certain notice, six months notice by January 1st, let's say, before the contract year ends. Most contracts – how many of you are on calendar year contracts ending December 31st.

(Male audience member): I was.

Howard Shalowitz: Were you? For all those years it's still December 31st.

(Male audience member continues): Not all those years. It changed in about the middle.

Howard Shalowitz: Till what, about September 1st or August 1st right?

(Male audience member continues): Always September 1st but then it was January 1st.

Howard Shalowitz: Wow! That's interesting. How many of you are around August 1st – September 1st – somewhere like that? Right before *Rosh Hashanah*? *(Male audience member shouts "July.")* Well, that gives ample time. And then it says, "Before July give 'x' number months notice and all that." So, with that, with termination, make sure there are good provisions about notice -- not only for you to the congregation, but the congregation to you at the end of the term.

Now, how many of you have congregations in Canada? How many of you have been in congregations in Canada? Okay. Canada is very strange because there have been two cases that I know of, of Rabbis who have signed contracts for a finite number of years (3 years on one, 5 years on another). When those terms were up the congregations said, all right – you ran the term. We don't want to renew. And the Rabbis sued the congregation – 2 different cities in Canada – saying I had an expectancy that I was going to go beyond those 5 years or beyond the 3 years, even though it just says (clearly) from 1999 to 2002. And they won! It's Canadian law. Ok!

One of them sent a Rabbi out. They said, you're not a Rabbi yet. We want you to go get *s'micha*. We're going to send you out for a year. And they did. They paid for him and everything. He came back to a smaller place in Canada (I won't say where) and he came back there and for 2 years – he had a 2-year contract. He had family problems, he wasn't this, he wasn't that, and apparently they didn't teach him how to give sermons or read *Torah*, or *paskin sheilas*... *(Laughter)* ...or learn *Talmud*. So they said, ok thank you very much for the 2 years. It's not working out. You know, you get to live in the house for however long (another year if you want), but we're going to go look for someone else.

He sued them. He said there's was an expectancy that I was going to be here more than one contract term – even though there was nothing in writing (no oral thing even). He said it was my expectation – and he won! And then there's another similar one at another place.

(Male audience member): Does anyone know what the statute of limitations is on that?

Howard Shalowitz: Statute of limitations goes by state. You mean Canada? *(Audience member replies, "Yes.")* "No." That's one place I don't practice. But statute of limitations goes by state. So generally, I'll tell you what it is in Illinois and Missouri. Generally, if you have a written contract, the statute of limitations is 10 years, on written contracts. If you guarantee something... I guarantee to provide service... and there's a breach of the contract – 10 years. If it's a negligence case, in Illinois it's 2 years – Missouri it's 5 years. Some states have a 3-year wrongful death (I hope you never have to deal with that!)... It's 3 years. So it goes by state and usually some intentional torts (battery, assault) in some states it's one year, in some states it's two. All right, that's your lesson on the law...

(Male audience member): Those that have December or January...

Howard Shalowitz: Oh, for the contracts. If you have those – generally it's six months. If you give six months – it's in the Cantors Assembly Contract...it tells when. But if you give an intention of renewing a contract, some of you – how many of you have provisions that say, you're 'x' number of years and then with an option to renew for 'x' number of years after that? That's up to your discretion. OK.

Well some is at the discretion of the Cantor and some is the congregation and some is mutual. But at least you're locked into the terms so that six months before the expiration of the contract you say, we've already locked in 'x' number of dollars and the terms for the next two or three years down the road. Do you want to renew?

(Male audience member): Just one aside and that is that this is where the placement commission gets into trouble. If you have a contract, if the Cantor has a contract, and the congregation has the same contract, we have to make you abide by the contract. We have to be as fair to the congregation as we

are to you. So if you want to break your contract in the middle – you can't just do that. We can't say, ok you can do that because that congregation will say, well why are we dealing with the Cantors Assembly.

Howard Shalowitz: Right. It's a bad reflection on you as a *Hazzan*. It's a bad reflection on the Cantors Assembly. Right! If you... and I didn't mean to construe this before as you're free to go whenever you want. You have a contract, you have an obligation and chances are you're digging your own grave. Not only with that congregation but also with the next one and the next one. And it's a bad reflection on the Assembly, because they'll say this person came from the Assembly, why should we go to the Assembly again? Stay with your contract. And we're going to get to this about how many years or life-term, etc. And I've had many clients who had life terms, but that was a different case. (*Laughter*) That was the criminal aspect. (*Much laughter*)

(*Male audience member*): But if the contract is with the Assembly you have to wait (*garbled*) to get another position.

Howard Shalowitz: Yeah. It depends on... I mean you could write that in your own contract. The individual circumstances, I'll talk with you afterwards about, but we'll go through the general things.

Buy-out and Buy-in of Another Congregation -- Again, that's in the Cantors Assembly contract. Generally the Cantor who has seniority at both of them – congregations are there. But, you know, maybe that Cantor who has seniority wants to retire or they want to buy out that Cantor and you stay on. But there are problems with that because many, many congregations are selling and they're merging. It happened in Chicago with *Beth Hillel* and the *B'nai Emuna* in Skokie and those were two huge congregations 20 years ago. And *B'nai Emuna* just was going down so they merged with *Beth Hillel* and there's a problem – where the Rabbis go, where the Cantors go, etc. etc. So make sure you have a buy-out and buy-in of another congregation terms. And, again, the model for it is in the Cantors Assembly contract.

Arbitration and Mediations -- All right. This is something that I want to talk to you about to make sure that everybody understands this. In the Cantors Assembly Contract (it's paragraph Roman Numeral XI, Resolutions of Disputes) there are three little paragraphs – A, B and C.

"A" says, "It is hoped..." -- It's hoped. Those were what are called precatory words. That means like when you do a will and you say, "It's my desire that my nephew take care of my dog when I die...." Well, that's nice. That's your desire, but if it says, "My dog is deeded (as personal property) is deeded over to my nephew." That's a different story. It becomes the nephew's property. But "I would like for so and so to hire Attorney Steve Berke to be my attorney for whatever." Well, they don't have to. "It's my desire." They're called precatory words.

So here it says, "It is hoped that in the event of any disputes arising out of or in connection with this agreement, the synagogue with *Hazzan* shall utilize the offices of the Cantors Assembly to help resolve the conflict." Ok, what that is, is just giving a guideline -- the congregation says ok that's nice. We go to the Cantors Assembly and we hope that the Cantors Assembly can facilitate something to work out something between the *Hazzan* and the congregation. But if you're getting to that point where you can't resolve it on your own, I don't know? Do a lot of congregations come to the Cantors Assembly and start ... You know, we're going to go to the guy who's on, the organization's that's on the side of the *Hazzan*? If it gets to that point, you go to the next step. So there's "B."

"Should the above process not result in a resolution, then the synagogue and the *Hazzan* agree to submit any such dispute to mediation and, following that if unresolved, to arbitration, either with the United Synagogue's Committee on Congregational Standards or to any such bodies as mutually agreed by the parties. So the successful party may submit the arbitration award to any court with competent jurisdiction for enforcement." All right, first, mediation. Mediation is not Judge Wapner or Judge Judy. (*Laughter*) Mediation means the parties come together with a mediator, a neutral party, and they try to resolve this. And they talk about the issues, they do a lot of mediation, the issues. First with everybody together. You tell your side, they tell their side, and then you go in separate rooms and the mediator talks to you first. "Tell me the story. Tell me what you'd like." The mediator listens and then you kind of confide in the mediator. The mediator never tells the other sides what each one is thinking. And then the mediator

goes in the other room and starts talking. "I think I can get them to this. I think I can get him or her to this. I think..." And then you, through the mediator, start talking and you finally get to, we hope, to "Yes." It's non-binding. Mediation is just you're sitting there with some neutral person who's trying to help you out with the process. If you can't do mediation, then there's arbitration. Arbitration is Judge Judy and Judge Wapner and all that, where you're saying, "I'm not going to go to court. I'm going to have some arbitrator (could be a retired judge, could be a well-respected person in the community, could be any one or any three people, you could have a panel). Generally what happens is, if you can't agree on one arbitrator, you pick one, the other side picks one and those two people agree on the third. Or, if you want to have a panel of three, you can.

Just like *Dinei mamono bish'loshah*, right, in the *Talmud*, you have money matters dealing with courts of three. So that's how they get that. The problem is here that, it says, "Either with United Synagogue's Committee on Congregational Standards or to any such bodies as mutually agreed, the successful party may submit (may submit) the award to any court of competent jurisdiction." It doesn't say "shall." When the word is "shall" or "the results of the mandatory of the binding arbitration" – doesn't say "binding" here – will be enforceable in a court of law. In my opinion, that's what it should say. That's what your contract should say. If you're going to go through that whole process, you don't want to then say, "Well, it may be submitted or it's non-binding", cause someone could say these are non-binding arbitration clauses. You have to say they're binding and enforceable in a court of law in a competent jurisdiction.

Also, who pays for this alternative dispute resolution? Who pays for the mediation? Who pays for the arbitration? It's not in here. So you should always have that in there. I had a case recently where it said that the winning party, the winning party pays for the arbitration – which is actually an interesting...

(Male audience member): What if neither party wins?

Howard Shalowitz: Everybody's a winner. No, no, no! Yeah, it depends on who the winning party is. It's a matter of what you're winning, because if one says well we only ended up paying \$50,000 but he wanted \$100,000, how do you determine who the winner is. So you just say the parties shall split evenly the cost of arbitration but it's not in here. It doesn't say who pays the cost. And sometimes people think they're going to be on the hook for arbitration and mediation costs.

(Female audience member): Typically, how much can arbitration cost? I don't even understand what the costs might be in that case.

Howard Shalowitz: There's a place called United States Arbitration Mediation, or the Triple A – there's another one, not the Automobile Club, but the other one. And they charge like a \$300 up front fee just to use their facilities, and they'll order lunch for you, whatever. And then the arbitrators can run anywhere between \$200-\$300 an hour, which, you know, in some places that's cheaper than your lawyers – in some places more expensive than where you are. So if you're there in arbitration for 5 hours and it's \$200 an hour, the arbitrator gets \$1000 – but in advance you submit papers to the arbitrator that says this is my position, this is his position. This is our high, this is our low, that kind of thing. So that could run another couple of hours. Arbitration could run \$500 to \$1500, something like that.

(Female audience member): For all 3 arbitrators?

Howard Shalowitz: Oh, for all three? No, per person! My suggestion is get one – get one good one.

(Male audience member): What happens if the congregation -- without going to arbitration -- just fires the Hazzan? What option has that?

Howard Shalowitz: And you have a contract?

(Male audience member continues): Yes!

Howard Shalowitz: You sue him. You go to court without an arbitration clause.

(Male audience member continues): But the contract says you should go to arbitration.

Howard Shalowitz: Right. Oh, and if you sue in court the court will throw it back and say your contract says you go to arbitration.

(Male audience member continues): Yes, so!

(Male audience member – new): And if it doesn't work, I guess you could sue or...

Howard Shalowitz: No, no! If it's binding arbitration, whatever the arbitration decision is, you're bound by it. And here's why I suggest arbitration. First of all, it is....

(Male audience member continues): That's the issue. That they congregation, they can fire me, but you cannot go to the court, you must go to arbitration.

Howard Shalowitz: Right!

(Male audience member continues): Right, but now you are without any job, sometimes you don't have any income...

Howard Shalowitz: That's why you should go to arbitration

(Male audience member continues): You don't have any money, and face it, you're going to United Synagogue and they drag you for months without any *parnasah*.

Howard Shalowitz: Do you have any idea how long the judicial process is if you go to court? That's why you go to arbitration. Arbitration is, you pick an arbitrator within 'x' number of time.... What I'm saying is, in this contract, it should have who pays for it (binding arbitration), how much time you have to pick an arbitrator, etc. You go through arbitration and you can be finished in a matter of a couple of months. You don't have to go through all the discovery process, the interrogatories, and you have 30 days to answer them, then you get another 30 days for an extension and depositions and all. You go through arbitration and you need to move on with your life and get a job. Not you, I mean whoever's....

(Male audience member continues): Why you cannot make the contract this way, that they both sign the Cantor cannot be fired...*(could not understand remainder of sentence)*. It has to be both sides. That's a fair thing. You cannot sue them without going to arbitration; they cannot fire you until you go to arbitration.

Howard Shalowitz: There are certain things about termination about firing. There's cause and then there's without cause.

(Male audience member continues): They can always give you a cause. I promise you. You know?

Howard Shalowitz: I know, they can make up causes.

(Male audience member continues): I here 16 years and nothing like this has happened to me, but I know it happens. You know?

Howard Shalowitz: All right, let's do this. Let's not do the personal ones till we get – yeah, we got 20 minutes. We'll run through it.

So you get the idea with arbitration and mediation, that you should do it. It's quicker; it's easier; it's a lot less expensive than going to court. Trust me, and it's only to your benefit to do that.

Salary -- Make sure your salary is delineated, obviously. You want to have a graduated scale, where you have "x" number this, "x" number that year. Put down how many times you're paid. Are you paid 24...?

It's kind of funny because, I think, in here it said 12 payments or 24. Does anyone get paid once a month? Oh you really do? Well, ok.

All right, sometimes they have twice a month, sometimes it's every 2 weeks. So make sure, because in divorce cases I say to my clients, "Ok, check the box. Are you paid monthly, are you paid semi-monthly, bi-weekly or weekly?" And they check off bi-weekly or semi-monthly – that's twice a month. So, ok you get 24 paychecks? And they say, no – we get 26 paychecks. I say, no. That's bi-weekly; that's not semi-monthly. Whatever...they checked the wrong box. Anyway, make sure you know if you're paid every 2 weeks or twice a month, so it works out.

Health Insurance – Make sure you have major medical and dental (this is a huge negotiating thing). Some congregations will say, "No, no, no! That's up to the Cantor to do it, or we don't want to give dental. We want to give medical." For you and your family! It's important that they do that. And, again, you couch this in terms of 'this is to the benefit of the congregation'. Why? You want your *Hazzan* to be healthy; you want your *Hazzan's* spouse to be healthy because, otherwise, the *Hazzan* is going to be away on family medical leave. Or you want the children to be healthy. And you want your *Hazzan* to have teeth like Steve Stohr. OK? (*Laughter*) It's too bad he left! I mean, really. You want to have a good smile.

One of my parents' friends passed away recently. Right before Cantorial school he says, I hear you want to be a *Hazzan*, and I said yeah. He said (he was a dentist), he said one piece of advice for you – and he was great golfer, too, so I thought he was going to say perfect your golf game and go out with the Board of Directors. You know this kind of thing. He says, "Make sure you always keep your teeth nice and white and clean. Nobody wants to hear a *Hazzan* with bad teeth." I thought, if I'm facing the other way, who's going to see me ... anyway. But he was a great golfer.

(*Male audience member*): My congregation, I'm sure like everyone's we've been talking about, they say, "We don't care – health insurance, whatever. Here's the number and you do what you want with it." Do you recommend that, even in that case, you still make the congregation specify the amount of money that they're paying.

Howard Shalowitz: In other words, they'll give it to you to pay, or are ...

(*Male audience member continues*): Yeah.

Howard Shalowitz: Again, that's an accounting question because, if they give it to you and then you can write off a certain amount of your health insurance for you, your family – and that changes every year. Almost always, about how much you can write off. Or they just have a package. It depends on tax wise what is better and what kind of package is better. If you go with United Health Care Plan or a Blue-Cross Plan, or whatever, that might be really inexpensive on your own and they reimburse you. And tax wise it comes out well and it's a good plan. Go with it. But otherwise, some of these congregations have great major medical and dental and psychiatric and everything kind of plans. And those are the ones...and some don't have any. Right! And then you have to take care of it yourself and then you write it off. Actually you reminded me of something. I was just going to tell you this. I'm having a 'junior moment'. (*Laughter*) It'll come back to me. Go ahead.

(*Male audience member*): I just want to ask a quick question because there's this tension between those who have a salary and prescribed, itemized benefits in their contract. And, like me, the congregation gives me a gross income in the contract and you do what you want – which they call a cafeteria plan. Can I just ask this just for my own... Who has sort of the cafeteria plan and is struggling with that kind of – cause that's something that ... ammm....

Howard Shalowitz: Yeah, the cafeteria plan is more like a pick and choose? Right!

(*Female audience member*): In other words, we're going to give you \$100,000 and you can divvy it up any way that you want?

(Male audience member): Right

(Female audience member continues): In other words, parsonage, *(could not understand words)*...whatever?

(Male audience member): You go to them and basically you say, ok this is what my salary and my parsonage will be, and then my benefits package will include vacation, and da-da-da-da... line items, and this is the amount. And then their bookkeeper takes your chart and portions it out.

Howard Shalowitz: Yeah, again, that's something to take to your accountant. Now, I remembered my 'junior moment'. COBRA – if you are terminated for whatever reason – you quit, they fire you, and it's over. You can get, you have to under Federal law – you get COBRA coverage, which is, you pay in to what their plan was. It is so expensive! I can't even begin to tell you. So the Federal Government, when they want to make sure people just weren't stuck without insurance after they left a job, so they want to make sure there was some sort of insurance. It's very, very expensive for COBRA coverage. Make sure that in your contracts (this is another little perk to be negotiated) that, in the event of termination or whatever it is with the Cantor (the Cantor leaves or the congregation terminates, whatever), that for period of 'x' number of months or a year, or whatever it might be to negotiate, that the Cantor is still covered under the major medical plan. And then you don't have to deal with that very expensive COBRA coverage.

Have any of you dealt with COBRA before? Is it outrageous! So, lets...we got 10 minutes. We'll run through this.

(Female audience member): I'm sorry. That's terminated during your contract or just they don't give you your contract?

Howard Shalowitz: Say again.

(Female audience member): Early termination.

Howard Shalowitz: Yeah, early termination. If you're contract's over, it's over.

(Male audience member): Along those lines (which is going to come up in severance), there is this understanding that termination and non-renewal is the same thing. But is that separate for insurance?

Howard Shalowitz: Really, you could do whatever you want, but generally if someone says, no, the contract's over and you're moving on. Why should we pay? I don't think anybody would pay. But it's early termination. That's what I'm talking about.

(Male audience member continued): I know, in your situation. But they claim that they were not renewing the contract, although we knew there was more to it than that. But clearly the understanding is that non-renewal and termination is the same thing. So in the matter of severance, the congregation is expected to pay the severance package – even for non-renewal of the contract.

(Male audience member): After so many years of service.

Howard Shalowitz: Yeah, right, right! Termination I'm using is if they termination before the end of the contract. Severance is, let's say the contract is up. So, in the Cantors Assembly Contract it's up to six years, I think – seven years, there's nothing. And then 7-to-10 it's a quarter of a month for every year, and then it's ½ and ¾. And then, from 1994, if you were employed since '94, it's one month for every year you've been there – if they don't renew. So that's to protect you down the road. If you've been somewhere for 20 years and you started in 1990, and you're going to end in 2010, you're going to get 20 months (according to this model), 20 months of severance. That's not for being terminated. That's if they don't renew your contract.

(Female audience member comment – could not understand.)

Howard Shalowitz: If it's not renewed, period. Ok?

Job Description, Delineation of Duties with Rabbi – Make sure it just doesn't say he's in charge of all the music, etc. They might want a little more specifics. Oh, Cantor, didn't you know you're supposed to be at *minyan* every single *Shaharit* and we want you to *hashkama minyan* on *Shabbos* and the regular *minyan* on *Shabbos*. So delineate as much as you can what your duties are. And if it's not written there, you're not responsible to be there. But it is nice to show up; trust me – show your face.

Liability Insurance – If you're taking kids on a trip, you make sure you have a release from the parents, or at least one parent. In a lot of divorce situations, make sure that it's the one who has the legal custody of the child who signs off, because, God forbid, a bus turns over or whatever, and you're the one who organized the trip and got the bus company. You know where the finger's going to point. It's going to point at the bus company. But then, if they go broke, they're going to say, "You're the one who got the bus. Didn't you know the driver was drunk? And didn't you know you organized it? Da-da-da! Get a release from everybody. Also get what's called E&O, Errors and Omissions Insurance (E&O). The synagogue should pay for it for you – that any duty you have for the synagogue (field trips, whatever it might be) on premises or off premises.

Let's say you turn on a light that says 'do not turn on' and it causes an electrical fire and someone is injured – whatever it is -- Errors & Omissions Insurance for the Cantor. It doesn't really cost them a lot of money. It's a very inexpensive policy.

Term of Contract – Life versus Years – Again this is something I go over for my criminal clients all the time. (*Laughter*) When you do 'life' in a synagogue, you do 'life'! In the Federal, it 85%. So you're better off being a Federal prisoner than being a ... (*Laughter!*) No! My suggestion is – and some of you might disagree with me – never take a 'life' contract. Ok, never offer one as a synagogue, never take one as a Cantor. Some of you might disagree –say, 'no I want to have the comfort; I've been here 30 years already'...a lifetime. Get a finite number of years. Get 10 with a 10-year renewal, or something.

The reason being, I can't tell you how many times I've dealt with Cantors as clients, dealt with Rabbis and the flip side on synagogues, that they have a life-time contract and the Cantor's voice is whatever. Or the Cantor's work ethic is ... or the Rabbi's work ethic ... and they just – nobody's coming and they're tired of the Rabbi, tired of the Cantor. The synagogue is going to go bust, going to go bankrupt – no one is showing up. And you have a life-time contract and nothing hanging over your head. So they want to get you out. So what do they do? Who's the one who said... or they come up with some little story about 'I heard the Cantor di-di-di-di-di – whatever. Because it's their way of getting you out. And if you think it doesn't happen, then trust me it happens. And the stories aren't too nice, either.

There's no incentive for you to do your job and no incentive for them to want to keep you – because if you're not showing up anyway, or she's not showing up.... Don't take a lifetime contract. It's not got for the congregation; it's not good for the Cantor or Rabbi. Some of you may disagree with me but, for the most part, there have been too many problems with that.

Jurisdiction – In here it says, "Make sure you have the jurisdiction in the State you're in." You could get a lawyer to negotiate the contract, because negotiating is kind of across the board – anybody can do it from any State. But when you deal with the actual laws of that State, if you're in New York, you're going to deal with the laws of New York.

If there's a Breach of the Contract -- The contract doesn't say, and this is what I think should be included in the Cantors Assembly Contract. In the event of a breach of a contract and you do go to court and you do have these expensive depositions and you do have attorneys fees and you do have all these things, who pays for it? It should be the non-breaching party. Ok, gets paid, and the breaching party (the one who's fault it is, ultimately). So if you sue the synagogue and you win, the synagogue is going to pay your attorney's fees. So it gives an incentive to settle the case early on. Because if they know, uh oh, we're going to have to pay our lawyer and, if we think we're being not so nice about it, we'll have to pay for the other lawyer; it's good to have who pays the attorney fees.

Blue Penciling in a Contract – That just means if there's an unenforceable provision, the whole thing isn't thrown out. It just means they blue pencil through the one thing.

Ok, very quickly, I'm going to go over this in a matter of five minutes. All right, don't worry. There'll be plenty of food for everybody. This is food for thought. You ready?

Cases of Employment Discrimination – Age, if you're over 40 years old. Gender, including harassment, which is probably the most commonly filed form of discrimination. Age is the easiest one to win of all of them, but none of them are easy to win. National origin --let's say in this case they're only hiring Israelis or someone says, "You know what, we only want to hire American Cantors. We don't want an Israeli. We know he's qualified, he's an American citizen, but he came from Israel. You know how they are." They could have, seriously, a suit against you.

How to spot it; how to fight it; what to do. The EEOC (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission) has what's called a Charge of Discrimination. You cannot just file a lawsuit. You have to file a Charge of Discrimination with the EEOC. Almost every State has a Commission on Human Rights that has, like a smaller version of the EEOC. So you file with the EEOC and then you check a little box that says I also want to file with the State Commission in Maryland or in New Jersey, and then both of the files. And then you give your grievance and then they give their answer and it goes back and forth.

After you get what's called a "Right to Sue" letter. Do any of you know about this? Ok, good, I hope you never do. But if you get what's called a "Right to Sue" letter – by the way you have to file within 180 days, so it's a quick time turnaround. If you wait a year to file or a year and a half, you're out of the box. You have to do it within 180 days and then you get what's called a "Right to Sue" letter down the road. Then you have 90 days to file a lawsuit – either in your State court or in Federal court – claiming whatever kind of discrimination. So that's if you're the one being discriminated against.

Ways of preventing it? Some innocuous terms that you might... Say you might come into the office and you might be male and there's a nice young woman who's just hired and you come up and pinch her cheek and say, "Hi Sweetie. Oh, do you look cute today." Ok! I can't tell you how many times little old ladies come up to me (they must be blind) because they say, 'Cantor you're so cute' and they pinch my cheek'. So they must be blind women, but you know, I'm not offended by it. I mean their husbands are standing right there. However, the flip side. If you do it to someone who's younger, and they are new in the office, or whatever. So just be careful because anybody – they could file these complaints and everything. And it's the last thing you need. Be careful what you do; be careful what you say. All right!

Let's see. How to Get A Job and Keep It; Answer Calls; Responses; Getting Out in the Community – we don't need to go over this stuff. This is all obvious stuff.

Five Responses to Irate, Nervous Parents – Rob Lieberman, who I'm rooming with here – was my roommate at the seminary – said to me, "What are the five responses?" I said, "What?" He said, "Yeah, it says five."

I think it might have been a type-o – either that or just respond five times. Tell them five times; it'll sink in. No; no; no! Really, what I was going to do was open it up to you, but we really don't have a lot of time to do that. The best thing to do in that is just listen. And then tell the person, 'I know what you're going through with a *Bar Mitzvah*. This happens all the time with people. It's a natural response that you're nervous, you're this; you're that. It's your oldest child. Everything's going to be fine. I promise – don't promise! Everything's going to be fine.' And just add confidence. And tell them you know where they are. You've gone through it yourself. You went through it with other students, etc. But listen! Don't be combative. Just listen! listen! listen!

I'll give you a quick story. One Rabbi in St. Louis (who's not there any more) – he retired after many, many years in service. Someone went in to him and just chewed him out. We're not going to say what they did because it's being taped, but you get the picture. They chew this guy out, up and down, and this

and that. And he sat there and he just looked at them and he says, “Thank you very much for sharing your thoughts.” OK! (*Laughter*) What are you going to do? They’re going to go home and say, “And all he said was ‘Thank you for sharing your thoughts’.” He was a *mench*! Yeah! So as much as you want to just want to...(*sound of fist hitting hand*) let ‘em have it, just go home. Talk to your spouse about it. Don’t start saying in the community, this and this and this, and then the gossip goes... Just, as much as you can, keep your mouth shut, except when you’re singing!

What are you legally allowed to do...marriages out of State, out of Country, without a license, without a civil divorce, with a *Get*, commitment ceremonies. All right, in a nutshell, most States have criminal laws if you are performing a marriage without a license or, you know, that two people... that you cannot solemnize or attempt to solemnize a marriage. For instance, let’s say people have a *Get* but they’re not yet divorced – but they want to have a commitment ceremony. But they send out wedding invitations and there’s a *Chupa* and they want you to sing the *Sheva B’rochos* Say, you know what, I’ll do the religious aspect of it, but not the civil because they can’t have a license because they’re not civilly divorced. You will go to jail and be fined! It’s usually a misdemeanor – you’re in jail or it’s a \$1000 fine or both. Ok, in most States (except Utah, where... blah-blah-blah) (*Laughter*) and if you’re Mormon.

But I had a situation with that, where people had a *Get* and the divorce was not final. They said, well the Rabbi’s going to, you know, just say some words, a commitment thing, da-da-da-da... After I informed them it’s illegal to do that he said, well it won’t be a real marriage. It’ll be a commitment ceremony – man and woman, Jewish, you know, everything kosher. I said but there’s going to be a *Chupa* and he’s going to break the glass. Big deal! And it says ‘wedding invitation and the wedding of, the wedding of’. I said, it sounds to me like you’re doing (*many comments from audience members*)

That’s right!

(*Male audience member*): It should be the other way around. The *Get* shouldn’t be issued until the civil decree is....

Howard Shalowitz: You’re right. There are some that flip – that do both. That’s a whole other issue. Come to our Chabad continuing legal education classes in St Louis. We go over that whole issue. But anyway, the thing is, you have to have a civil license in your hand to do it. You have to make sure that you, as a clergy from out of State, are allowed to go in that State. Some States don’t allow it if you’re not a clergy in that State. They’re kind of opening it up now for everything. Make sure the civil divorce has been granted. *Dinah D’malchutah Dina* – the law of the land is the law!

Thank you for your time and attention and now I will answer specific questions privately.

“Spirituality and the Pulpit”
Wednesday May 10, 2006 1:45 p.m.
Presenters: Hazzanim Jack Chomsky and Emanuel Perlman

Session began with a nigun led with Cantor Scott Buckner, Minnetonka MN.

(Music, singing/chanting, etc. here – loudly to softly)

Manny Perlman

...There, and then he took his last breath. Hazzanim, we must awaken and reinvigorate *Rosenzweig's* words. And now it comes, the point of all points, which the Lord has truly revealed to me in my sleep. The point of all points for which there is the knowledge that God exists in us. We are God's name. *Rosenzweig* was so deeply moved by the liturgy of the Yom Kippur services that he remained a Jew. Nowhere is it written, but let us surmise that Franz heard a humble Hazzan in an orthodox Shul.

Hazzanim, we are with God “*Ki Emanu-El*, for God is always with us. We need to know this and communicate it the best way that we know, through our voices, by maintaining and enriching our musical tradition and by being proud of it. Let us complete the words of Franz *Rosenzweig* with the b'racha we recite for a sacred moment, but let us add two words. “*Baruch Ata Adonai Eloheinu Melech Haolam Shehecheyanu V'kiy'manu V'higiyanu Lazman HazehBamakom Hazeh.*

Jack Chomsky is co-president of an organization known as BRAD, Building Equality and Dignity. He serves on the board of his local Jewish family service and coordinates social action programming in his Shul. Through a life and career devoted to acts of kindness that have lead to a higher spiritual awareness, Jack will discuss spirituality with us. We move from *Ya'akov Avinu* to our own beloved Jack.

(applause)

Jack Chomsky

Thank you, Manny. And it occurs to me, before I begin what I've prepared, that in some ways my own personal discovery of Jewish spirituality, a large piece of it happened at Temple Emmanuel in Providence, Rhode Island, where I sang in the choir where Manny's father, Ivan Perlman (who many of us know very well) was the Hazzan. And I think of your dad singing Max *Helfman's Kad'shenu* and I knew there was something special in that moment. He also enabled me to then start working as a cantorial soloist in a Reform congregation. When people would come up to me after services and tell me that, through my singing, they had found God. This was pretty scary cause I didn't exactly know where God was, but this shows the power that Jewish music and the music of liturgy can have. And I have to admit that this has not happened in many years. Now that I'm a full professional, nobody ever comes up and tells me they find God after the service. But, we can continue to strive.

Let me begin by considering that fateful word spirituality

I will tell you from personal experience that not so many years ago, I dreaded hearing that word, as some of you still may. It suggested to me a conversation in which someone would endeavor to make me feel that spirituality was missing from the synagogue and from Jewish life -- and that it was to be found, instead, somewhere else.

So it was with some trepidation that I entered into a 2-year program entitled “The Spirituality Institute for Cantors” -- a program which is now engaging a second cohort of Hazzanim from across a fairly wide Jewish spectrum in a series of 4 5-day retreats over a 2-year period, with weekly *hevruta* study connecting the retreats.

I entered this program not because I was particularly interested in learning about yoga and meditation, or because I felt that my own life lacked spirituality. I entered it because I knew that questions of spirituality and spiritual practices were not far from the mainstream -- that they were relevant somewhere in the Conservative Movement -- that my congregation was the only Conservative congregation in town -- that the other professional staff in my congregation didn't seem to have an interest in this area -- and that someone on our professional staff ought to know something more about it.

Having completed the program, and having continued my engagement with the Institute through continued hevruta study, I will say first of all that this word -- spirituality -- (the "S" word) -- should not frighten any of us. In fact, it is a word that we should love. It is a word that connects perhaps more than any other contemporary word to what we do and feel as Hazzanim, and what we should be striving to inculcate in our congregations and communities.

A dictionary definition of spirituality says "the state, quality, manner or fact of being spiritual." Not much help.

So we go to spiritual: (1) "of, relating to, consisting of or having the nature of spirit; not tangible or material." Sounds like us. (2) "Of, concerned with or affecting the soul." Sounds like us. (3) "of, from or relating to God." Sounds like us. Join in any time. (*laughter*) (4) "of, for or belonging to a religion; sacred." (*all repeat*) Sounds like us. (5) "relating to or having the nature of spirits or a spirit; supernatural." I go for "sounds like us". I'll have to convince you a little bit.

What do I mean, "sounds like us?" I mean, it sounds like this is our agenda -- what we care about, what we strive for, what turns us on, why we persist at this marvelous profession. As described in these definitions, our work, our calling has to do with the spirit. Ours is not exclusively a material pursuit although, thank God, we are actually paid to engage in it. It is totally connected to God and the soul and the sacred. The supernatural? When I hear that word, I don't think of science fiction. No. Science fiction has never been a personal interest of mine. Supernatural? I think of Pinchik's *Roze d'Shabbos*, or the voice and compositions of Yossele Rosenblatt -- or the way that a hazzan calls to God on behalf of the kahal. I think of that moment that was described in the Heshel lecture yesterday.

My point is, I feel confident that those of us who are gathered in this room, who have come to spend time together this week at this Convention, are the most spiritually connected people to be found in our synagogues. Our sacred task is to deepen the spiritual connection of our selves, of our rabbinic colleagues and our congregations, so that we can all share in that marvelous journey.

As I undertook the journey of the Spirituality Institute, I hoped that the path would be compatible with what I already valued. I am happy to report that they are more than compatible. The elements of contemporary spirituality, when properly grounded and founded in Jewish practice, are, I believe, indispensable to enriching your journey and the journey of those whom you serve.

The core focus of our retreats was in developing mindfulness -- the ability to focus on our bodies and our thoughts, to experience the joy of life and of prayer, and to consider how these would impact our lives and our music.

What could be more Jewish than an appreciation of the wonder of our bodies? Who knows this better than us, the ones who know and teach *t'filot*, wherein we recite a prayer when relieving ourselves, and specifically focus on the abilities of body and mind every day in *birkot hashachar*?

What could be more Jewish than to focus one's mind? Our Jewish minds have been the greatest minds in history. I believe this is because our Torah-centered life has given us the mental discipline to master the knowledge of our traditions and of the cultures and nations among whom we have been blessed -- or cursed -- to live.

Although today's presentation is not a reenactment or recruitment for the Spirituality Institute, I think it will be instructive to describe how we spent our time. At each retreat, we were strongly encouraged to arrive as early as possible on Sunday, in order to make that a working day, and to leave as late as possible on Thursday.

The fact that these retreats were held in a bucolic Connecticut setting during the summer and a sunny and usually warm California location in the dead of winter certainly didn't detract from the experience. *(laughter)*

The typical retreat day began in silence. The only speaking in the morning was done in conjunction with our daily services. The services involved a great deal of joyful singing, a heavenly earthly choir, as it were -- not unlike that which we sometimes find at our convention. Last night Ma'ariv service was a beautiful spiritual experience on many levels. Of course creating these wonderful hazzanic choirs is a little bit of a challenge on your home turf, where you don't have the beautiful sophisticated voices surrounding you that we do when we gather together.

After a silent breakfast, during which one would endeavor to be more conscious of the sensations involved in tasting and eating our food, most of which was quite delicious, we would have a period of meditation guided by Rabbi Sheila Peltz Weinberg. Some of my colleagues had a great deal of experience in this area and perhaps strong ideas as to the particular benefits of one or another approach. For me, meditation was a new venture. It was done sometimes stationary, sometimes ambulatory -- that is, a walking meditation. Following our meditation, which was usually about an hour or 90 minutes, we would have instruction in Hasidic teachings and traditions with Nehemia Polen, a visionary teacher with encyclopedic context from this aspect of the Jewish spiritual world. Just as we began our session today with a nigun, Nehemia always prefaced his teaching with a nigun, usually one not yet known to us. This provided a quietly powerful way to make a transition or separation from the world of silence into the world of speech, from individual to group consciousness. I have found the "nigun tool" extremely useful at other times -- to create a sense of holiness or separation as we begin to study or learn together.

Sometimes the study would be of some of the musical implications of our spiritual search. Benjie-Ellen Schiller, a well-known cantor and composer in the Reform movement guided this. In a sense, we were all equal partners in this element of the program, as we were the first cohorts of hazzanim going through the process. After the morning study we would break our silence with quiet conversation during lunch -- followed by a session of yoga led by Rabbi Myriam Klotz. Again, there were wide variations in the amount of experience among the participants. Myriam was a teacher of great range -- being able to stretch (literally and figuratively) the experience of both the expert and the novice and placing this physical activity into a very Jewish context.

The value of the opportunity to discover yoga and meditation in Jewish context can hardly be overstated. For many of us yoga and meditation may sound like foreign pursuits. I can recall a recent article in a national publication about the "marketing" of new activities around synagogues that brought out some very negative comments on Hazzanet from some of my colleagues. It is true that, as best understood my many, yoga and meditation are activities associated with other cultures. Yet much of what is involved in these pursuits is not only consonant with Jewish thought and action, but actually fits very well within important Jewish traditions and has long-standing experience in Jewish traditions.

It seems obvious that the schedule alone, which so clearly slowed our pace from the frenetic routine most of us keep daily and weekly, would be good for the soul and body. In other words, each of us benefited from the change to our personal lifestyles. But the broader possibility and the long-term challenge for each of us is to use these activities to deepen our own spiritual lives and enable us to develop the professional and experiential vocabulary to deepen the Jewish spiritual lives of our congregants.

I will tell you that this experience has been hugely helpful to me -- both personally and professionally. Exposure to and moderate mastery of these spiritual practices go a long way to improving our control over anger in our lives, and anger can be destructive both internally and externally. It is destructive externally because it puts us into conflict with those with whom and for whom we work -- almost always to our disadvantage. It is destructive internally because it eats away at the quality of our emotional and physical state. I didn't have a problem with anger per se before I went through this process. Maybe you think I did -- maybe you think I still do -- that's up for you to judge me, if you choose. But I find that I have a very significantly greater handle on this issue now.

Friends most of us are often at the mercy of the power of others. We won't name them, but...I've heard you talk about them. Anger almost always exacerbates the disadvantage in that power relationship.

Ability to control anger can actually go a long way to empowering us and helping to turn adversaries into partners.

Another area in which I have benefited tremendously is openness to new ideas and a willingness to make the most of any experience. To be honest, one of our most positive Jewish traits often turns out to work to our disadvantage. From an early age most of us learn to be very critical. We are highly praised for asking an incisive question that strikes at a soft point in an argument. Unfortunately, too often we internalize the idea that we have an almost sacred obligation to find fault with whatever we experience. Again, this really doesn't benefit us or those we criticize. Somehow, as a by-product of my experiences through the Spirituality Institute, I feel that I have learned to search for meaning and value in whatever I experience. Instead of finding a flaw in a concert, service or idea, I can receive it more fully and reflect on what value is to be found in it, even though it may be far from perfect. Again, this benefits me and it benefits the person or entity that offers its thought or creativity to me. I have to tell you honestly that at least one colleague told me that it's not as much fun to sit with me as it used to be. (*laughter*) I'll just leave that there.

This alteration to my lifestyle and interaction means that, even when a person may approach me with what seems like an alien or out-of-place idea, I can probably find a way to receive the idea in a positive way, and to bring us closer together – potentially to bring that person into the sphere of interest that I'm trying to create.

I can't honestly say that I've mastered these things well enough to draw a large number of people into the same practices, but that is our challenge and our opportunity. I have continued my weekly *hevruta* study. Encountering texts from within our tradition, which speak so powerfully to self-control, mindfulness, joy and the desire to emulate the behavior of the *tzadik* helps to keep the right behaviors within reach most of the time.

And the Institute's fully realized spirituality program for communities, *V'taher Libeinu*, provides a potential opportunity to teach these experiences widely.

Now this is the first part of that curriculum and the idea is that people who have gone through the Institute will understand the routines, the procedures, and be able to use this material to create groups in their communities. It's amazing and it's all there. I haven't done it yet. I mean I can't do it myself; I need partners for the meditation, for the yoga. I haven't looked hard enough for those partners yet, and I hope that maybe the spur of an event like this will move me forward, so that we can develop this in my congregation and in my community – because these benefits that we can personally receive are things that others can as well. And this is a very specific and intentioned curriculum that does a marvelous job of really connecting with a great deal of traditional Jewish thought and content.

Again, I wish to stress that my desire in speaking to you today is not to "enroll you in the program", so to speak, and I will say that there are among us people who have a great deal of experience in one or more of these areas, some through the first round of the Institute, some currently enrolled in the second round, and some through other programs. There are many things going on, so my number one thing is to say, don't be afraid. Check it out. Bring your full self to it. You will be exposed to things, some of which you might not accept, but some of which you might find valuable. And boy do they need *hazzanim* to be there as ears and eyes and mouths appropriately offering what we have in our heart and our experience.

So I will state as powerfully as I can that there are genuine traditional Jewish values to be found in almost any spiritual practice that is becoming popular in your community. I would encourage you to educate yourself, take some risks, and bring people close to you. The desire for increasing spirituality in our congregations and communities is potentially a great boon to our sacred work, but only if we can learn to embrace it and connect it to our work and our craft.

It's 2:30 now. Our session theoretically runs until 3:00 and, perhaps I should have told you at the outset so that you wouldn't be too nervous, that I would talk straight up until 3 o'clock. I've described for you some of my own experiences. I would like to take some time and invite a few of my colleagues, who went through the program that I did, to offer their own insights and magnifications or denials of what I have said. And Scott Buckner, in particular, has prepared a musical offering, so to speak. I'll let him describe it, but I'd like to call on Robert Lieberman and David Lefkowitz before Scott. Your guys have been *hevruta* partners, so...whatever you like.

Robert Lieberman

Thank you, Jack.

(chanting)

This is actually a story from *Reb Sh'lomo Carlbach* of blessed memory. He tells a story about a very well known professor of literature who was very well known and outspoken, that in his writings – in his speeches -- he would say the worst thing you could do for a Jewish child was to give them a Jewish education. Who needed it? *Feh!*

One day this same professor walks into the office of one of the great *Rabbanim* in Jerusalem and says, "Rabbi" – and the Rabbi doesn't really want to interrupt his study so he peers above his glasses and says, "Yes." And this professor says, "Rabbi, I've come to dedicate myself to Jewish education." And the Rabbi looks, knowing well who is standing before him, says, "Are you for real or did you come here to mock me?" He says, "No, Rabbi. Listen. I have a story." And the professor launches into this story that he was called back to service and he's in the hills of Lebanon and he's shot. And he's lying on the ground and he feels himself bleeding, and he knows that his life is pouring out of his body – but, if he stays awake, he knows he'll be found by the search party and he'll be saved. And he realizes all he needs to do is think about something.

"I'm a professor of literature; I'll think about Shakespeare...maybe a little bit of *Hamlet*." No, that didn't work. "*Ahad Ha'am* is my favorite writer, I'll think about his writings." That didn't work either. "And I felt a tear coming out of my eye and I remembered a memory of walking to Shul on Erev Yom Kippur, holding my grandpa's hand as I'm walking on the sidewalk. Then a tear came out of the other eye and I remembered when my mama was lighting those *shabbos* candles, I was a little boy and she made the circles and when she opened her eyes she gave me such a big smile, a hug and a kiss (one on each cheek). Oyl!"

"*Simchas Torah*, I'm on my father's shoulders, and what are we doing – we're dancing, we're laughing, we're singing, and I'm enjoying my Jewish life – and then I really cried, because I realized that Jewish education isn't just for when you're a little boy. It isn't just for Bar Mitzvah. It's for every single moment of every single day. And I was aware of that, and I could still feel the blood coming out, and I knew I needed to think of something. And at that moment I realized I had it all wrong. God forbid, what would happen if my grandson were shot and he was lying here on the ground. I've given him absolutely nothing to think about – nothing from an entire life"

"And in that moment of being aware and feeling, I looked up to the heavens and I prayed like I've never prayed before." *Y'hi Ratzon Mil'fanecha*.

"If this one time you'll save me, I promise you I will dedicate the rest of my life to Jewish education. And Rabbi, the next thing I knew, I woke up in a hospital – and here I am, to dedicate my life to Jewish education." (*Nigun*)

And so, friends, from what I gleaned from being a member of the Institute with Jack and a *hevruta* partner with Jack, is I learned that it's ok to receive, it's ok to listen, it's ok to share, and it's ok to be silent. And I

also learned that, in my role, it's more than ok to create opportunities to educate and to share and to teach and to capture some moment in some way, all the time that people can take with them.

And one of the great things that has happened for me is that I started to write, and I began writing in e-mail – first, just to my board, to share with them what am I doing in my community – and then it dawned on me this e-mail could be an opportunity to teach something. And that grew into what I call a *Shabbat* greeting, and I try to write this every Shabbos – it doesn't happen every Friday afternoon, especially in the wintertime when I run out of time – but I try to find three things. One is a quote that might relate to the Torah portion of the week. I share with them things that are happening with the community, and I'll share with them a tidbit, a poem – something from our learning's – something from our stories – something that I think moves me and may just move someone else. That e-mail now goes out to about 250 people, that includes members of the congregation, certainly the Board members, but family, friends, some colleagues, some folks that I've been in the Institute with, and certainly the parents of very Bar Mitzvah student of mine.

So I brought with me just a few Xerox samples, and I would mention that the poem that I use for my page and dedication of our esteemed colleague Hazzan Abraham Shapiro of blessed memory is something that came out of my heart as a result of this work with spirituality. And, yes, it was first written for my father, but I felt it was incredibly poignant and appropriate for Abe. I'm not going to read these to you, but if you would to, I did bring some Xeroxes and you are welcome to leaf through them and take a look at what the e-mail does look like and, if you might be so moved to try a few of them, feel free to add your name and an e-mail on a blank sheet.

Thank you very much. Thanks, Jack.

(Applause)

Jack Chomsky

One of the challenges, and I was discussing this with a colleague earlier, is that you can have these experiences and you want to bring all of them to all of your people immediately – and it's very crucial to find just a little shake to put on one or another moment in your professional life – whether it's in a service or in a teaching or just event in a chance encounter. Robert, I thought you did a great job of that. I also would like to call on Hasha, who went through the experience with us. David, did you want to say something?

David Lefkowitz

Thanks. Robert and I have become very close and we study every Friday morning together, so as busy as the week becomes, there's a certain time that we set aside every Friday morning and actually study from the *Parshat Hashavua*.

(Nigun and clapping)

I deliberately just worked with the nigun without any words, because it's the theme about what I want to talk about today. I must say that this is one of the most profound experiences that I'd ever undertaken in my life. I've had a long career and one that I've enjoyed thoroughly and I enjoy it more now – and it's given me the tools to understand the challenges that all of us face each day -- challenges that change all the time.

Jack talked about obtaining certain attributes that give us more of a sense of control of anger, patience, and the ability to understand to our congregants – the ability to appreciate *t'filah* in a way that, even though we get into the text with depth, we don't necessarily always see the beauty in the *Siddur* – that the conglomerations of so many generations.

I recently wrote a journal article that actually just came out yesterday, this journal *Rayanot*. And it was on this subject of people getting involved in synagogue through song and, perhaps, missing another aspect of it. So I wanted to focus on that because it directly deals with something we face all the time. This actually happened on *Simhat Torah* this past year. I'm on the *bema* and I'm watching the glee growing in the congregation – and I'm saying, "What is this? What is it?" Was this partying, just having fun? And I'm just going to skip through a few parts here.

We are singing songs (and it doesn't matter what the prayer is), no matter what the song, it's the energy or emotion that is primary. The more rhythmic or exciting the song, the less significant is the prayer. And so, I wondered. Are these words really prayer, or are they irrelevant. Now some of you who have known me for a long time may be surprised at the direction that this essay is going. There are a lot of pointed questions here, which could bring out a different kind of reaction than what this essay is about.

And so I thought if I wrote an essay about this, I'd be quick to point out that I'm not unaware of the value of this experience. I'm not criticizing people who are not paying attention to the text because, I know very well, that there are times in Jewish life – and I believe this is true historically – that, while the text may be very significant, there also may be tremendous value in the congregants just getting into the mood and the spirit that it drives. And I call this a release; and I think that we've had this in Jewish life always.

If we look in medieval Jewish literature, we'll find that there are numerous insertions of poetic songs in the *Siddur* for special occasions -- like *Adon Olam* and *En Kelohenu*, which are very popular – and certainly on the High Holy Days we have things that are much more involved – we'd call them *piyyutim*. And these works have a built-in fun quality, with rhyme, rhythm, alliteration, and a form that historically produced a huge quantity of simply, joyous songs. However, the texts are also quite significant. They often bring an intellectually stimulating appreciation to the theme of the *Piyyut*. Most often these are sung happily – part of a release. We think of the *Melech Elyon* right before an Untane Tokef. You're building up energy, getting into this incredible spiritual moment. The most essential point, you know, before *K'dushah* of what this holiday is Yom Hadin, you know. So what do we do? We sing a silly song. "La'ade Ad Yimloch Melech Elyon"

Well the text is not silly at all, but the tunes that we use for them are ridiculous. But, you know what it's ok. It's really ok. And I think it is intended to be that way. It lent itself. It's not about nusach, it's not about...you know, this was the only chance – if you really think about a High Holiday service – there wasn't much chance for participation. But these *piyyutim* created these Melech Elyon melodies. La'ade Ad Yimloch Melech Elyon. You have these rhyme sequences that go through it and we sing songs that – sings a *nigun* La'ade Ad Yimloch Melech Elyon. But it's joyous. It releases us, relaxes us, and we can come back to the seriousness of it.

Now, the musical effect of these inserted hymns, though, over a period or time, has resulted in what we face today – currently – the desire to sing most of our prayers with these kinds of melodies. Even if the texts do not relate to such phrasing or interpretation. And, of course, we use this in Hebrew School. A song we sing like Birkat Hamazon. We've been singing these songs for 60 years, to what's a pretty silly melody, you know. And it doesn't have anything to do with the text. But kids memorize it. As a result people know Birkat Hamazon by heart, or at least the parts that have a melody to them, and so there is a value there.

Now, I think about music in general. You take a Beethoven symphony. There are a lot of different ways to react to that symphony. When I was a child, I would play it on the phonograph, and I loved it. I played it over and over again. Then when I was a sophomore in college, I had a music appreciation course, and I thought, "Wow, is that what it's about!" And, when I look at that now, I say, "Yeah but, you know, it's okay – there are different levels. So maybe I knew nothing about what the symphony really was about, but I appreciated it on the 4-year-old level.

What about songs like *Adon Olam*. When we sing, most of the congregants may not be thinking of what the prayer means at all. That being said, I think there's also the possibility that when we create music

properly, that it does follow the phrasing of the Hebrew – that it does interpret the Hebrew – that it helps guide us to what this prayer is about. Then the music paints the text. That's significant. Can it be done? Sure, it can be done. We work at that.

OK, now, *Adon Olam* – is it just being jolly? For me, it's one of the most beautiful prayers in the whole *Secure*. It's deep; it's significant; it's simple; but it's also beautiful. And if you concentrate on the t'filah, you really get what Judaism is about. The message is that we need to have humility, not think too much about the powers that we have in life. We need to realize how small each of us is in the total scope of time in the universe. And we can attain that by focusing on *Adon Olam* – the sovereign of all.

More importantly, we realize that we are not insignificant, when we say a *V'hu Eli V'hay Goali* – that powerful God belongs to each of us. Each individual, each living thing is special and very significant. The aim of music, and certainly so for prayer music, should be to bring out the meaning of the text – and how wonderful it would be if our singing of *Adon Olam* or *Alenu* could always enable us to feel connected to God and to appreciate the gifts in our lives. And, sometimes, music can do this. There might be settings of *Adon Olam* that could do that.

But, there may be times when we must forego these for the sake of joyful involvement. And for congregants who don't read Hebrew and find this is an access point into the liturgy, there is value. As long as we can encourage people to reach for increased knowledge and understanding, we must also be comfortable with appreciating that each of us will receive these on our own individual level.

(Applause)

Jack Chomsky

This room, I think, is better for meditation than anything. And I was rather prone to sleep during my meditation. I wasn't the best at it. You know, there's not much air circulating and we're all doing the best we can. The clock is running on and I'm conscious that there's another session at 3:15 that I think many people will want to attend. I want to be respectful of other presenters – also the needs of the group. I did want Hasha to have an opportunity to speak for a moment, but we'll have to try and keep it...

What I'd like to do is try somehow, by 3 o'clock, to get to a point that we can have a little bit of questions and discussions, but I think we really need to be on our way by 5 or 7 after 3:00, so we don't hold back the afternoon. At least that's my plan.

Hasha Musha Perman

How many of you have some meditation practice – would you please raise your hands, please. So look around the room (you can put your hands down). The most surprising thing about being involved in the Institute for Jewish Spirituality and the retreats that were twice a year for the first 18 months, was silence as an integral part of the daily retreat. We were silent for about 2/3 of the day, and I thought that was ridiculous. I thought, why would you go to a place, where there were hazzanim and cantors, to be silent. I expected a curriculum of music, and it was not a curriculum of music. It was a curriculum of spiritual process.

So, I would like to share with you for 3 minutes – we're going to do a meditation – so you can relax. It doesn't need to make you tense. What I'd like you to do is put your feet on the floor and unfold your arms and put them on your legs. Yes, breathing is good!

So people have been talking to you for the past several days and some you have heard, some you have listened, some you have understood, and the goal of this meditation is to calm your mind. And the way I suggest you do this is – close your eyes. You can listen to your breath. You might nod off – that happens sometimes in the beginning -- but I encourage you to see your thoughts. They will come to you.

You'll begin to think about something. Let it go. And when another thought pops up, see it and let it cross the screen, and let it go.

(Deep breath)

Listen to your breath. Take a deep breath – it will help you relax. We're going to do this for 3 minutes.
(silence)

Open your eyes when you're ready.

The function of silence is very profound for me, because it created an atmosphere of safety.

Rabbis and cantors who have gone through the Institute for Jewish Spirituality...

To experience the presence of God within you, and look at the other person you were paired, and to see "*Ruach Elohim*" in them, and to use that as a model for listening.

(Applause)

Scott Buckner

None of us really knew exactly what the other was going to talk about or say – a lot of wonderful things have been spoken – I just want to mention a couple things that were very powerful for me in this process. Jack was talking about mindfulness and it's really the art of paying attention, in a different way. Really paying attention.

I think one of my biggest fears is letting things go by and kind of missing my life – you know, missing my children grow up. I mean, we're so busy, we're missing the things – living life with intention. And that what *mitzvot* is about – the mindfulness of doing a *b'rahah* before an act. It's already built into Judaism, this mindfulness. It changes the act we are about to do – you know, eating the piece of bread becomes something entirely different when it's preceded by *b'rahah*. *Shehehyanu* for something special and new in our lives.

I had a profound fear of kind of sleep walking and missing a lot of things and, also, Jack mentioned we're brought up with a lot of criticism and I think a lot of that we turn on ourselves. So, this opportunity, this crucible that we created of a supportive group of non-judgmental -- we helped each other kind of release our own self criticism, because compassion for others and that deep compassion of listening that we also really worked on – compassion of listening exercises – was one of the most profound things for me.

When we arrived, the first thing we did was sit in groups of 3. One-person talks and the other 2 just listen. No feedback, nothing – just listening. Accept that as an offering of what you're going ...why you're here and what you're going through. It was cathartic to just let it out – all the things, all the pains you deal with, all the conflicts, and all the struggles of living and trying to be a spiritual leader. And a lot of times we're the shoemakers without the shoes. We're trying to be a spiritual leader but where do we...how do we draw from the well...how do we, you know, feel that every step that we take is a gift from God.

This helped me have that time to remember that – to get back to that – to return to it. And a lot of it, we call spiritual practice – it's, you know, why do we say a hundred *b'rahot* a day, you know. If we were really going to get somewhere and arrive there, we'd say the *b'rahot* and we'd be done. It's a returning, right? I mean it's a *t'shuvah* – it's returning again and again to, hopefully, an appreciation of the gift of life and a connection to God. So it's about attention, it's about *Kavanah* – what *Kavanah* are you going to bring to an interaction with someone.

I always had a lot of trouble looking people in the eye and really having the kind of connection you get when you stay with the eye contact. You know. Well the people who leave these groups and have been

doing this for years – I was amazed, you know. A lot of times you have to look away first – at least for me. And they would look at you and really see you, and you really learn to see them. Being seen and seeing others – that's part of what it's about.

Nechemyah Pawn gave us this Hassidic teaching about the gaze of appreciation – when you look, you look with appreciation, the gaze of appreciation. I found in allowing myself to have this work in practice – and it's work, it's really work, it's not easy. It's like all the things come up in that silence for you. But the gift that I got is that I have more joy in my life than I've ever had and more joy in my work than I've ever had. And, yeah, there are always lots more to do and lots more practice.

So that's that, but I want to give you a gift of one of the things that I found very powerful in the work is, one of the retreats we had at *Rabbi Shefa Gold*, and we learned this little practice of sacred chant – a small verse. You know, the liturgy comes at us and it goes so fast, there are so many words – especially for congregants those words are overwhelming – and I use these now in my congregation. I've gotten feedback from people who can connect with the liturgy now in a way they never did before, because all the words were going by and “it's too fast for me and I can't...where...what do I do?” So it gave them a chance to focus on one verse and then experience the meditative thing of repeating the same melody over and over. I think *Shefa* makes it very interesting because she adds harmony to a lot of it, so it adds another layer than just a straight melody of the verse.

So I started writing these chants and it's nice. I mean, I have a Bat Mitzvah coming up and the family came to me and said we want to do a *nigun*, they are very musical. So (it happens to be the up-coming president of the congregation) I wrote them a chant. It was politically good, right. I wrote them a chant – it's not the one I have for you here, but I'm writing a third part – and they're gonna one part, everybody, all of them, on the one part, and I'm going to sing the harmony and have another singer from the choir sing a third part. And then the congregation has a couple minutes of silence. The chant...(Shefa's practice is...) the chant informs the silence.

What I'm going to do is have you hand this out and I'll briefly tell you about the text. Yeah, we'll do it. We'll do it. I want to be respectful for others, but they came here late and everybody...it won't take long...we'll be respectful.

So this is Psalm 51, Verse 14. The Psalm deals with the outpourings of the human heart. These are actually *Richard Wohlberg's* words because I came to him to ask him about the Psalm – I'd forgotten where this verse was from – but he says the Psalm deals with the outpourings of the human heart, agonized by the consciousness of sin. So it's David's sins and they are bothering him. I talked about self-compassion and this ties into that. He's got this real agonizing heart and he's longing again for the joyful sense of God's saving power – restore to me the joy of your salvation – “*Hashiva Li S'son Yishecha*” – and let your spirit uplift me.

So there's 3 parts to the chant. It would normally be followed by a couple minutes of silence. In our congregation, another thing we instituted was we have meditation before *Shabbat* services twice a month. So people come for an hour, we have a group of people, and actually the leadership of it rotates because I've found, like the people in this room, you'll find in any room and many congregations there's people with experience in meditation, so we take turns leading it.

Shabbat morning before services – *Shabbat* morning and then we bring that with us, that attention, that Kavanah that we gained through meditation, into the service with us. It's another wonderful way. And we usually begin with chant. So I usually bring them a chant and we begin with chant, we go into silence, and we come out of silence into another chant a *Nigun*. So why don't we have 3 sections here. Voice one...voice two...and voice three. OK.

Let's all sing the melody. The *nigun* that Jack and I started with was the voice one. I don't have perfect pitch but whatever we start at is fine with me.

(Chanting "Hashiva Li S'son Yishecha)

(Chanting and singing)

Second part is...

(Chanting and singing)

OK, and the third part is just...

(Chanting and singing)

Why don't we have the basses...whoever is a bass-baritone take that. OK. And then we'll have some people over here do the melody, and the second part over here. And we'll all start...

(Chanting and singing in three-part harmony)

One of the nice things about these chants, too, is there's...always an opportunity for me to add another part, so if I have some strong singers in other congregations going on it, I usually invite people to close their eyes because meditation...

I was going to read you a quote but Jack's probably not going to let me do it. We're running out of time. OK. But, there's a publication that was created within the Synagogue 2000 thing the *R'fuah Sh'leimah*, it's a book – and in there my teacher, *Shefa Gold*, there's a wonderful 2-page explanation or thought about how she thinks about chant and it's use as spiritual practice. In that book, in the section of chant that's in there (it's a beautiful thing...I was gonna read to you...), if you want to look at it or read it – I have just one copy here. Yeah, I can send it on *Hazzanet*.

Jack Chomsky

I had another story to tell you to conclude, but we'll save it for another time. If you'd like to stay and speak with one of us informally and learn more about it, I think that would also be ok. Let me just get a sense, though – if we were to try and create a stream of programming in Los Angeles, to give some opportunities for some more of this, how many of you would be interested in that?

And those of you who have experience that you would like to bring to bear on it, I guess – since I was the presenter – I'd be happy to be a focal point for those ideas.

Manny Perlman

We thank Jack and his distinguished panel for broadening our horizons with the word *Ess*.

A New Way to Teach Tropes in the Computer Age
Wednesday May 10, 2006 1:45 p.m.
Presenter: Hazzan Tzvi Taub

Sheldon Levin

We waited till Steve Stoehr came into the room. We're glad you're here. We thank you all for coming. This should be a very fascinating session. As you've been hearing from Steve Stein's talk yesterday, from Howard Joffe's talk this morning, the Cantor's need to be learning new skills that will bring us into the 21st Century. And so we give a great *Kol Hakavod* to *Hazzan* Tzvi Taub, who will be presenting for us some of the materials he's been working on, to bring ancient texts into our modern technology.

Tzvi is a member of the College of Examiners at Royal Conservatory of Music. He is an associate teacher there and he studied voice and piano, and he graduated both in performance and education. He's also a graduate of the Karen *B'yavneh* Rabbinical Seminary. He studied *Hazzanut* with Cantor Benjamin Unger and Yitzhak Eshell. He studied also at Bar Ilan University Musicological Department, and he's been a member of the CA for over 20 years.

He served congregations in Canada and the United States and has held the position of Cantor and Music Director at Temple Sinai of Toronto. He's often been interested in computerized music composition and that interest has led him to programming and to the formation of two computer companies – *Forments* and Bytes Corp. And he recently added Koltor Corporation, which focuses on software development for Jewish education. Please give a nice round of applause to *Hazzan* Tzvi Taub.

(Applause)

Thank you *Hazzan Levin*. Good afternoon! I'll just wait a second till the last people find their seats. The common tendency is to think of tropes as music. As such, they often challenge as sad-sounding or lacking a beat. You likely have heard a perennial complaint 'Ah! Tropes'. When Moses broke the tablets, God punished him by giving him tropes. *(Laughter)*

Tropes as music alone are a legitimate musical exploration subject. As a distinct sound style of music for culture, they merit further musical development and manipulation in all creative directions. Composers have already done so, with varying degrees of success. I truly believe that there is room for inspiring creation that can be exploited there.

Tropes, when used in their traditional role in worship are, by music standards, unfairly judged. Of course it is a sense we are dealing with a complex system which harbors several tasks -- text interpretation, also sentence division, grammar, memorization, musical tradition and so on. This last statement treads dangerously close to Mark Twain's comment regarding Richard Wagner. Twain stated, "Richard Wagner was a musician who wrote music that is much better than it sounds." Indeed, tropes melody by itself could come under the same criticism.

Tropes are best described, not as music, but as a form of heightened speech and relating this to the aphorism, "speak that I may know your soul." When we listen to a heightened speech delivery by a Torah or Haftarah reader, we listen to their interpretation. At the same time they communicate their intellect, imagination, voice, manner of presentation, and their creative improvisational skills. And a whole person comes through. The same as we judge them through a conversation.

My statement that tropes are really a form of heightened speech dates back to the system preceding the *Masorah*. The system preceding the *Masorah* is usually classified into three. They are the Jerusalem/Israel System, the Babylonian System follows and then the Samaritan System. The Israel/Jerusalem and the Samaritan Systems are considered to be, by most scholars, pretty much the same.

I'm going to the adult section of the course, by the way. This is not information that would be suitable for *b'nai mitzvah* who are 13 or 12 years old.

In here you see the table of the Samaritans. If I just may pause, please. The Samaritan System had 10 symbols. You see them around the table illustrated here. Five of them are typical punctuation symbols, akin to what we have today – *Sof Pasuk*, *Etnahtah* and so on. The signs in red indicate that they are equal roughly to a period, colon (:) and semi-colon (;). A 'lesser-colon' is something along the line of a *Zakef Katon* or *Gadol*, and a question mark (?) in here. Those are five of the symbols of the 10.

The other five are the five listed below and if you see them – can you see what I'm marking with the...is it clear enough. Yeah. So this is, for instance, *zea'kah* -- like in the Hebrew word *zea'kah* (a loud, urgent calling). And when a person would see it, he would express as he expresses that kind of speech. The second one *etma'hu*, like a *mapah* that we use today. It's a heightened, anxious question mark, or marvel and oh!

The third, which I love in particular because this is slightly the opposite of a variable in computer terminology – usually it goes the colon and then the equal sign. So here they used already them; they used something similar. This is *zaff*, and again it still regains the same connotation in Hebrew today – *zaff*, anger *toruh* from *hora'ah* (instruction). It looks like a *zakef gadol* of today – a manner of teaching, explaining or instruction. And *ba'ah* (or *baa*) – this is the only one that I cannot relate to today's Hebrew – perhaps somebody can suggest. I would be looking further to learn more about it. But, in any event, this is some form of pitch descending into diminuendo expression.

So when the interpreter, the reader, would read, as he expresses in speech those emotions, he would apply them to the reading of the sacred text. And this is where I want to show you that the concept of heightened speech was the root of the *t'amim*.

The *Masarah*, of course, have become a system. The very system that we use today is much more complex than that, but it did not lose the essence of the system – that it is there to express the text.

When we have to transmit this to students, we have to realize that (besides the connection to the long heritage of chanting, and assuming personal responsibility to carry the tradition of reinterpreting the *Torah* and *Haftarot*, passing it on etc.) they also master the skills of interpretation. The skills that are inherent in the disciplines imbedded in the learning process of tropes. These complex skills are found in fields like theatre, music, and speech arts. They incorporate improvisation, arrangement, vocal communication and language skills. Study of these skills contributes, of course, immensely to the mental, intellectual and artistic development of a person.

To give you an idea of the high level of the skill set demanded, consider the following. The style of tropes is most akin to *recitative* in early oratorio or opera. While vocal students begin with vocals and then progress to songs and arias, the last subject added is the *recitative*. The pedagogy in the leading methods in conservatories introduces an easy *recitative* the first time at around grade 8, which is usually the level demanded to enter college or university music departments. Therefore, artistic maturity to deliver a simple *recitative* is assumed to be at the age of 16 to 18.

Tropes are also better categorized as a monody rather than melody. The term 'monody' (or a monodia) coming from the term 'equal singing' or meaning 'singing alone', was coined during the Sixteenth Century as part of the search to find the best setting to express the text....

...via solo intonation, which felt rather lost. The text was rather lost in the immersing counter-point, harmony and also being slaved to the meter. They felt that the text was disappearing, the meaning.

The best monody, according to *Galilei*, was to enhance the natural speech inflexion of a good orator. That's *Vincenzo Galilei*, the composer and father of the famous Galileo Galilei, the astronomer and mathematician. In the same vein, during the late Sixteenth Century, composers who introduced opera as we know it today, a group of them – Perry, Cachini, Cavalieri and Reno Cachini – they were searching for

the purest, most powerful form for text setting. Their inspiration was the classical Greek poem oration, which used intonation.

It was actually Perry, the composer Perry, who invented the *recitative*, as we know it today. Explaining it in his introduction to the opera “Euredice” (and I shall quote his explanation to the term *recitative*. “The *recitative*”, said Perry, “is a speech song; really an intermediate between the two. A system that takes care to emphasize or intone the relevant important syllables that would be naturally stressed in speech.” This it is thought will bring back the art of the ancient Greek’s heroic poems declamation. I wonder if these guys ever visited a *Shul*? We have quite a few adults and little kids who are well versed in this art – in the art of heightening the syllables or expressing the syllables or extending the speech.

So when we teach the subject of tropes, we are teaching the pinnacle of classical style, espousing the purest text expression forms of Western civilization, which may have influenced (also likely affected) tropes.

Still a difference exists between Bible chant and *recitatives*. Tropes are further stylized, also are put together by the interpreter. The *recitative*, even as it leaves more room than a song for creative interpretation, is far more pre-set than tropes. Even more important, there is a measure of improvisation in *timing*. Any improvisation in a study subject is a tall order. It is both harder to teach and harder to master.

Jazz, with its inherent improvisation, proved to be a formidable subject to teach. It took time and ingenuity to develop a course that produced a viable jazz musician. The jazz piano series, put together by the way by the American Association Board of the Royal Schools of Music in London, is a fine example of how to pass on this art, its unique powers on its terms. They include creative improvisation, training quick studies to master styles, aural exercises, etc., to develop a true jazz player who is versed in the language of his craft and is able to further contribute and grow this art.

As a side note, it is interesting that a typical reaction of the classical piano teacher to a creative student who is bored with the duties of classical piano practice, and requests study of jazz or jazz lessons. It simply comes that this kid probably loves to improvise, loves to create. And the typical reaction of a teacher will be, sadly, to provide a student with a set piece of music in a jazz style tortured into set meter and strict notes, to be looking just like another classical piece. This, of course, misses largely the point about jazz – its inherent creativeness, and that was what the student was about. I said missing largely the point, but not completely, since imitation is an important element of learning. Imitation alone, though, as a method of pedagogy for the 21st Century is rather primitive – especially in a subject meant to encourage creativity.

In tropes, it is the equivalent of learning by heart, or mostly by heart, the *Maftir* and the *Haftarah* versus learning the system and being able to create with it.

So let’s see what we’ve got so far. The subject of the *T’amim* contains complex, important set of implied learning branches. It espouses the finest expression forms and engages the faculties of knowledge, creativity, sensibility, music, voice and presentation. Well, it sounds like an ad for the most exclusive chorus in an elite private school or college. It’s really there. It’s really there. We, on our part, however, need to build awareness of the multi-dimensional learning aspects that are involved in the process. And they exceed the subject of tropes.

Also, teaching should incorporate state of the art teaching methods and technologies that incorporate the best in pedagogy. Imitation alone, as we said, is not enough.

And, by the way, learning or imitating a computer is still an imitation. E-learning, or electronic learning, has come a long way in the last 15 years. Navigation, hypertext and sound are now considered commonplace. The field of CBT (computer-based training) evolved to include sophisticated training through complex inter-activity, self-testing, etc. The computer-course flow, multiple disciplinary options, and effective course models have become, themselves, a field of study.

These were the points in the back of my mind as I was setting, going into building a course or a method for teaching the tropes. At that, our aim was that the chant of the Bible will feature thorough courses that include ear training, interactive quizzes, games, puzzles, interspersed humor, rich background and related resources to bring tropes to today's world. A course in which the background of our heritage would bring this abstract discipline to guide a young person to become a stylized, confident presenter, proud of her or his heritage and armed with life-long skills of knowledge and inspiring memories.

Some Cantors who, over the past almost 6-7 months when we presented this program, expressed a concern to me that a program like this will replace them altogether. Well, as some of you have already noticed, our High Holy Day *Software* allows for the Cantor to set his melody and also his voice into the program. And, also, we are bringing this feature into the main yearly program. This solves small, localized melody issues. Also deals with various teachers and traditions that may exist in one place. It also will allow a teacher to add interpretation of the text or further instructions to the students, right there in the program. But, in earnest, no teacher of English or Chemistry has lost his job due to the fact that they employ excellent course software, which is widely available. All it does is actually elevates the field, consolidates the subject and actually adds prominence to the office of the Cantor.

The same issue arose when publishers first came out with set books for schools. 150 or 200 years ago, teachers used to be making their own books. They felt threatened by a published book in math and language motif.

Consider what we talked about. I would like to suggest three things to employ in teaching tropes. One, consider to expand the application of tropes to other texts. Consider non-sacred Hebrew and English texts, in order to make it a living language. I know that some already experiment with this. Let the students explore applying tropes to their chosen favorite texts. Let them incorporate it into the speech, into the bar or bat mitzvah speech – a little bit. As a thanking for the parents, let it be sung in tropes.

Two -- inspire the student for self-growth in interpretation and presentation. We should insist upon a thorough understanding of the text and a prepared interpretation and presentation map of what the texts are reading.

Three -- let us have each student introduce at least one new thing of his musical interpretation – a small declaration, elongation. And I know, especially the boys 12 and 13, many of them are simply too young to deal with it. Well, let them do something very simple so it will remain with them. That they have to add a gasp at the end (gasp of surprise) at the end of the *Iyek'a* or whatever -- at least a crescendo *accelerando*, to drive the point of original interpretation.

With that I would like to go to the courses and show you some of the material there. We are currently – what you are seeing is the introduction of the course. I talked about multi-disciplinary and this was something very important for us. Very often we teach tropes to adults, not only for children. We designed the course in such a way that the magnifying glasses are designed only for adults. And so, for instance, here at the beginning of the course, we have a one-page history of tropes for kids. But for adults we have the section that you have seen some of, and it is quite fascinating. I think that many Cantors will find a lot of valuable information there as well. Throughout the course those magnifying glasses give information in depth, which is not available.

The little icon here is the kind of like so-called – we call her “Rachel” or personal teacher. This is information that should be always clicked. It's just like a home trainer that goes with the student at home. And this is the ‘jokes guy’. I'm sure you all have heard his jokes, so take a minute. OK!

The original joke, by the way – did anybody hear this joke before with the Rabbi and the Cantor? The original joke, I couldn't insert it so, in order not to clash with Rabbis, it was the Cantor. The Cantor has said to the Rabbi – the Rabbi is a liar, is a thief. So they took him, they took the *Hazzan* in front of the Ark and told him, listen.... Eventually they settled the fight between the Rabbi and the Cantor and they said, well, listen. The Rabbi is responsible for the text, the *Hazzan* for the melody and that's that. And they

took that but the *Kol Nidre* insulted the Rabbi in front of the whole congregation. So they put the Rabbi in front of the Ark, in front of the congregation and said, you have to apologize three times *Kol Nidre*, Rabbi, to take back your words. (*Couldn't dist*) The Rabbi is NOT!

In any event, the section of the introduction, as any other section, contains inter-activity, during the course and throughout the course you will see there are puzzles, games and interactive quizzes. So they are even in the little introduction section. One page that they have there for the children is available here with further information. The entire activity, such as we did here, we encourage in the introduction – we encourage the students to click on the various answers because they get more information.

So here it is. In the third question, do tropes have a place outside the *Torah*, referring to the first citing there suggested to bring text into the, bring tropes into text different. So, here, I just would like to remind, drive home the fact. I'm sure many of you are familiar with the fact that many texts used to have tropes applied to them. It was a common practice during the Middle Ages, and so on.

After the introduction, we go to the main course, let's say for the *Torah*. And the approach here is simple, intuitive, interaction. They just follow the order of the lessons. And they are grouped in such a way that there are two main lessons. First lesson groups the *Mercha Tipcha*, *Etnachta* and *Sof Pasuk* unit and the second lesson covers the *Mapach Pashta Zakef Katon*, *Zakef Gadol* unit. All the other tropes fall into the other three lessons and, as such, within five lessons – as you can see, there are only five lessons – they know the whole system. It's...they can see the end of it very quickly – the achievement of knowing the system quite clearly.

So, the interaction is very simple. They click and listen (*sings the tropes*) the name (*plays tropes on the piano*) and the music, and example of two and three (*inserts actual Hebrew text*). And, as I mentioned earlier, we're working on upgrading to the new version where you would be able to change the ... to insert your own voice, your own melody, where it would be various songs.

Yes (*recognizes audience member*)

(*Audience member*): Are you exploring the technology to listen to the student and interpret what the student is singing?

No. This is something you cannot do in this kind of course set-up. Are you talking, thinking about something like a different application where perhaps via the Web you can connect your student after they learn.... I'm sorry.

(*Audience member*): They also, they make technology where you can identify pitch from voice. It's still not perfect but...

Yeah. It's still not perfect. Well, well, that's the problem with it. It's quite poor. I know that *Sibelius*, for instance, is working on something like that. It could be, they say, perhaps ... in two versions. And I've heard it said also that it will be in version three and version five and now they say it will be version six. I don't that the technology is there. For my time, it's quite far away and I'm not sure, not sure that it's coming very soon. There are technologies, however, through the Web, where the student simply can record himself and he can just listen to the ... and correct, and so on. But this is not part of the

(*Audience member*): Is this a web-based program?

No, this is a set, either a server-based or a CD-based...

Sheldon Levin

Is it your vision that the family will purchase this and use it in the home, or is it something the synagogue purchases and the child is sitting in a computer lab or something that the synagogue provides?

In the best kind of situation, each student has his own copy and you have several if you have a lab in the synagogue, a computer lab in the synagogue. You have them here, so it is something that is always good to have when teacher not showing up or teachers have time...or students have time, they can go and practice their *Torah* and *Haftarah*, or whatever. And it's, I think, most effective though in-home studies, simply because, as human beings, we like to be in a private setting when we practice our voice – especially children.

(Audience member): Are you envisioning moving on to the inter-net based or web-based. I mean, the idea of needing to set up a computer lab in a synagogue is becoming more and more not such a useful thing. But, you know, if you could set up at least Intranet where they could sign in and then you can keep track of their usage.

Tracking of usage...that's another subject. It's not impossible...

Your suggestion is not impossible. We are looking into it. Actually we have one...

(Audience member): Economics is probably your biggest concern.

Well, it, yeah. It costs much more. If I may say this, there is no necessity for it even to be in a school computer at all. The student can just take it and use in on his home computer. That was an additional feature that I was talking about, is having set it in the computer as a possibility to have reference to it. It's not impossible to do it Intranet for a synagogue, if the synagogue can put the whole program – but it's a huge program. To load it over the Internet, even with high speed, at this point it will be very demanding and quite taxing on any server application (especially synagogue servers, which are not designed for multi-media at this point).

(Audience member): What's the difference between your program and that of any other?

Ah, this is a very viable question. It would be unfair for me to comment about other people's, other vendor's products. So, I'm going to show you the product and perhaps, by the end of it, it will be self-evident. I think that's the only fair answer to your question. I apologize. I'm not trying to avoid your question. I'm just trying to be fair.

(Audience member): You think this is as good as the other vendor's then?

Yeah!

(Audience member): Do you have just the one approach in terms of the notes.... (Could not understand remainder).

At this point in the early set-up, we do have one. We'll get, in a minute, to the high holidays – which is newer, the high holidays. It already incorporates the systems where you can insert your own voice, your melodies. And we have several melodies already, as well as text reading already included in it. And it will come to this. It's just that it takes time to insert it.

All the facilities by the way... The wonderful thing about computers, of course, is that you can easily incorporate many technologies into the page and they have all the reference in the world. (Male voice singing in the background.) At any point they can go to this table that we clicked upon or, if they want, they can go to a melody set here at the bottom of the page (which is available throughout the program). They can view the CD notes, listen to them in a high flute (*flute notes in background*), or a low voice (*male bass voice in background*), and so on.

I would like just to show you one comment. How to teach, I think, in tropes is the *trope Munach*. Since it does so many things, the kids get confused about it. So, for instance, in here in the very first lesson that they start with the *mercha tipcha*, we introduce the *munach* concept. *Munach's* melody is determined by

the trope that comes next. So we say here, think of it as *munach etnachta* melody. We will meet other *munach etnachta* combinations later.

The next lesson (I'm skipping, of course, a lot) is just a variation of those common sentences and introduction of the *Sof Aliyah*.

Sheldon Levin

Question! Those little pop-ups – do the kids have to read it themselves or does a voice read it for them?

Tzvi Taub

We didn't...do you see it as a point? I mean we could insert it.

(Audience member): Some of the kids are used to the voices popping up and helping.

Tzvi Taub

Yeah! That's a good idea. We could put it in. That's not a...just reads it.

(Audience member): You don't want to be like scrolling over and all of a sudden voices pop up.

Hmmm... It's something to consider, certainly.

This is Lesson 2 and I hear that *munach* concept. We thought about the Swiss army knife, the camping knife metaphor, because here *munach* appears as a – we show a *munach*, which is a very common *zakef katon* and *zakef gadol*. So we show an example here of with the *munach*. (Male voice singing.)

One of the things that we take care of is the things that are most immediate, like the question of is it *kadma* or *pashta* how come they're the same size. So those comments will be straight on the page. You don't go even to click on. They click on it right there because they see... Yeah, how come, it's the same. If there are students who are more inquisitive then they will go in and they will read more about the subject, and so on and so forth.

This is a review...I'll skip it...it's a review of *machsim* the role of *sof pasuk* and of *etnachta* and so on, and the location of the tropes.... And I'll skip to some of the puzzles and games that come. So after they learn this much – and in here there is a puzzle where they're going to match the tropes to the name. So they have learned in the lessons where to locate them. And this is a very accurate system. It would not accept, if we put it in the place of the beginning of the word, of course, as a *y'tiv* or something, it will not accept it. You have to put it only at the correct syllable and so on. As they fill up the whole page correctly, it's changing into color and they get information about this old synagogue in *Bar Am*, the history of the *Bar Mitzvah*, how they came about and so on. And now they match the shape to the name, they're going to match the ta'am, the taste, and the sound to the shape. (Flute in background.)

We just used *ta'amim*, taste, so now they have to know that this is the *etnachta* and be able to bring it into the... and so on. And they get something in the end. Each time they finish a string like that, they get something.

And here we're starting to put little segments together. Now they have learned those two-piece sentences and they... (Male voice singing tropes)... And then (Male voice singing text)... and so on. So they're starting several screens of this nature where they're starting to put together those little fragments to know how to do it.

This is generally how the course layout continues. And now we cover the rest of the tropes. As I mentioned about the *munach*, in here that's the one magnifying glass I would recommend to visit, because this covers the *l'garmey* and details also the role which we are all familiar with. When we have

several, let's say *munachim* before a *pazer*..., which are really interpretive *munachim* – I would call it. I don't think that anybody...or that most people would treat them that way.

(Audience member): What is the memory of (could not understand remainder of question).

At any point we can go to... We mentioned that we have coming up a system where you would have a choice to insert your melody, your voice, into the program. Also, there will be several melodies. The current one that we have in the *l'garmey* is (*male voice chanting*).

We took care to insert all the little things as we had for the *pashta*. Also, here, one or two symbols.

(Audience member): (Could not understand questioner.)

You're right! You're right! It's absolutely true. Thanks!

Let's... That's correct, it should move... Of the three-gazillion details we have a mistake here and there. I apologize.

I just wanted to show you that we take care of all the little details, like to show them...to make sure that they remember what the *t'lisha k'tana* and *g'dola* look like. Kids usually get confused with what is what and this is an easy reminder, and so on. And these are the comments that you would see throughout.

These are more 'ear-training' exercises. Lesson 3 – did they listen. They have to identify the sounds and so on. (*Flute in background*) They have a quick change and an example (*male voice chanting*) and so on. I just wanted to show you something about the *y'tiv* comment. (*Piano note*)... Here is an example of where the placement of the trope affects the meaning of the word and how it changes the meaning of the word altogether. And in this case the...for instance, comments about presentation, how they are also how to stand, how to sing...

I mean, I served at one time in a synagogue where the Chairman of the Ritual Committee, who was hard of hearing, held the rehearsal before the Bar Mitzvah. He would make everybody else yell. So we insert those things.

The next three pages are a complex puzzle. The kids have to fill in the missing tropes. So, we have an example here of the first sentence but the second one will be (*male voice singing*). So let's say that they decide it is a *t'lisha g'dola* (*flute*), and the program will tell them that it is not. And it's not here. If they chose something else that is in this page, they would not be able to place it in there. Eventually they listen again, and so on, and they put in a *pazer* (*flute scale notes and male voice singing scale*)... Oh, yeah! This is it. So then they have to place it. So they reinforce the sound, the name, the shape and at this point also the location. Again, it would not accept it if they put it below or not in the front or at the end. It has to go to the correct place.

As they finish the whole page, this takes about (for the average student), it takes about 30 to 35 minutes to do this page. There are balloons, when they finish, balloons coming up. It's certainly not more... It could be frustrating to some kids and, for that, we have a quick hint, so they can cheat a little. Well, you know, we have kids of all levels.

Second page, again, we have the same kind of thing incorporating other tropes – again with a quick hint. The third page is without a quick hint. You have to solve it!

The subject of *rare* tropes is covered in depth. There is very interesting information about the role of *rare* tropes – why do we have them, how do they came about, and why do you have so few of them, and so on. How do they make sense in the system, at all, to have such few?

(Audience member): (Could not hear questioner.)

Ah, where is the key change? Is that...?

(Audience member): If we have one in each flat? Like the *Bar Mitzvah* students. (Laughter)

I apologize; I just noticed it. How did this come about? (Laughter) Not only that, it end on the “e” – somehow the sharp... Thanks for catching it!

(Audience member): Are those stored as jpg's; is it adjustable? Can you change the melody as...? If you decide...? If you're using a different trope system...?

No. You will have to enter it... There is a utility. We're building a utility that you insert the notes

(Audience member): And that will change in all instances?

Yeah, it will change the instances. This is our mistake, obviously. Thanks for catching it. That's what happens when you present it to a room full of Cantors. (Laughter)

Finally, we have a quiz, which is tallied. This is... and also information is given about... well, I'll go through it. And they get a real perspective if they understand what's in it.

We talked a lot about a *munach*, so we bring it here again. We learn again about the hyper-trope that changes its melody according to what is ahead of it. It also can appear after itself in a row and have different melody whether it's first or second. Also it can fit more text into other tropes or be used to build up excitement.

What was the student describing...and daydreaming...

Zakef katon of course this is the *munach* so this is kind of like the approach that we took to show the *munach* and I have really... Well I got only 60 on all of the tests, but....

This thing it gives real information to the kids in terms of where they are as far as... They have to know tropes follow the same type of structure. The recorded *Torah* is fairly straightforward. We have a *tikun* included. In it all the versions of *Nusah S'farad*... Sorry, that for the *Haftarah*... but I'll get to it in a minute.

We have the JPS Translation included and the highlighted section is mentioned in here. So they just simply click on the sentence (*male singer in background*). They can go back and forth (*male singer in background*) and they can listen to the tropes to refresh their memory.

(Audience member): (Could not hear questioner.)

Absolutely! Yeah! It's not that you'll have to do it all at once. I mean, you can provide one *parasha* to a student and that... I'll get to this utility in a minute. I'll show you how it works, and at that point only that *parasha* will work. Try it! So you'll build up over time.

(Audience member): (Could not hear questioner.)

No this is a human voice. (Flute)

(Audience member): If a kid is trying to keep up, that voice is going along at basically presentation pace.

Right! They can go back and forth and listen to it for several times.

(Multiple audience members speaking)

There is now technology existing of stretching voice -- the human voice. There is no viable technology for singing that will do it in a...

(Audience member): If you use something like, you know, *protools*, you can usually time stretch.

We work with *protools*. We have digital performer; we have a whole studio. Now, let me tell you in earnest, the quality of what we're talking about (of each one)... if you wanted to... yeah. We can do it in *protools* to stretch something in *protools*, but the students will have to have *protools* to take this one sentence and to work for six hours to bring it...

(Audience member): Unless you stored it as...you stored a second copy at a slower speed. You did a time stretch of the entire thing. I mean, you know, you can...

Yes, but today...yeah! But, which speed? Yeah! Really, I mean... a measure. I see your point. I wish very much there was a technology like this and we could easily incorporate it. (*Flute in background*)

(Audience member): You could time-stretch it on the fly; you could time stretch it and store it so, for multiple speeds, so that when you have it this slow, I mean.

(Audience member): You'd need to determine how many you actually want to be able to...

That's a good idea. Is it really a general consensus this is something really desirable?

(Audience member): This is a problem I've had with students. I record things and then they complain, it's too fast, it's too this. And so I've actually made...I've recorded things and then I've stretched them and saved them again at $\frac{3}{4}$ speed or $\frac{1}{2}$ speed. You know, then you're talking about how much space you have on the -- I don't know if it's a DVD or CD.

Well, the program currently... This is a very tight file. The program that for instance for the high holidays is MP3s, so it takes a lot of room for the whole *Torah* and the *Haftarot* to be stored. It's something that we could look into.

In a real voice, to maintain a program as a real voice, this is... Right! That's a lot of considerations there. I just wanted to show that, at any point, they could click on a trope in the frame so to speak and listen to it. (*Flute*) So they can work on the *t'amim* on the page.

This is basically the frame, the structure of the whole *Torah* and then you go select chapter sentence, and they can go from there. The *Haftarot* follows the same basic layout. The only thing is we also have the small variations that exist with the *Hertz* and *Eytz Hayyim* variations. Also we have most of the variations that exist in the Art Scroll and also the *Plaut* edition, which is the Reform. So all of these are there.

We have a unit about blessings and then a unit about grammar. Starting with the tropes, punctuation. The role of *m'lachim* *M'shartim*, and so on. The ranking order of explaining the concept. The ranking order and a review quiz, as always, on any subject.

The subject of silent tropes, which is very important and often, often is neglected, is the issue. And here I would recommend clicking on the magnifying glass. And this is something to teach in a class. It's very good if you can bring your computer (the teacher) to the class and hook it up in some way to the screen, and show it to them. And then they can review it at home or something like that, because this is a very important thing. They see those signs; they have no idea what they do; and (*male voice speaking*) exactly how they affect the pronunciation of the text. In the case of a meteg here, and so on. And this review quiz -- which is a very typical situation -- that kids come to...the two *sof pasuks*...

(Audience member): (*Could not understand question*)

(Another audience member): Well it certainly gives visual clues, but kids have to know what they are.

(Audience member): I said that I think that, I don't know; I may be wrong, but whoever is setting your (could not understand).

OK! I see your point. It's a valid point. OK! Yeah. I think that Cantor Schwartz's point is good, that terminology should be different. So if I may...am I expressing it correctly? I understand it. I probably do not differ. Perhaps we should have chosen a different name to it.

(Audience member): (Garbled)... means something like punctuation marks...

Punctuation marks...OK! Well, perhaps we should have called the whole unit as punctuation. We have, of course, an intensive glossary, a comprehensive glossary – not so much intensive as comprehensive.

And I talked about creating with tropes, that we should inspire the students to put texts other than sacred texts into tropes. So we give some examples and this is something (*male singer in background*) or (*male singing in English* – “What you dislike done to you, do not do to others.”) And even more esoteric, as I mentioned, the *Bar Mitzvah* speech. Why not let them finish or begin? (*Male singing in tropes* – “May we all be able to gather together for many happy occasions.”) May be all.

So this is basically the main application for the *Bar* and *Bat Mitzvah*. I would like to show you the high holidays where you can switch – select your own tracks.

(Audience member): Is this available in Mac?

Unfortunately, no!

(Audience member): (Could not understand questioner.)

I don't know about that.

(Audience member): (Could not understand questioner.)

I'll be glad to discuss it outside the room. I don't think it would be appropriate right now.

(Audience member): I have no problem with that because I think people want to know whether we have a \$5.00 item here or a \$5,000 item. You know, we have to...

No, usually the software sells for \$159.99. That's for one. During the convention it's \$129.99 and, of course, for school volume, the volumes go to easily 40%, 50% and higher percent. So it depends on the volume that you get. So it's really competitive with anything on the market and it's, I believe...

(Audience member): You're definitely filling a different niche than something like *Trope Trainer*. I think that you both approach... I think both tools have their own place.

Thank you.

(Audience member): Just one thing about the money... For example, for those of us who're saying, OH \$125 is a lot of money...to spend on one *Bar Mitzvah* kid... As we saw in the film last night, we're going to spend tens of thousands of dollars, you know, on chopped liver and mother-in-law (*laughter*)... It's less than what they'll spend on one centerpiece. So you can ask the family to do that... Ask the family to develop a *Bar Mitzvah* theme that includes these kinds of materials, if you would want your synagogue to do.

Thank you.

(Audience member): Is this really meant for self-study?

Self study for children... I don't think it a... especially 12 and 13 years old. I think it's tough. They need to be supervised. They all have questions. They need to meet... in the same way, they need to meet with the Cantor to sing to the Cantor. They will have questions. And the Cantor further will inspire and give them more exercises in the areas that they need to include, and so on and so forth. I don't see it frankly as a self-study completely for children. For adults, yes. For adults, it's possible, but not for... Again, it's very hard. Any self-study, to be honest, without a framework where there is somebody who inspires, who challenges the students to see if they have done their work, is very hard. But... so... for children I would say there must be somebody there. I mean if it's somebody who is....

...A remote student, who lives 70k away and can come once a month, I would certainly work with the parents to bring them, to be involved, and to listen to the child and to supervise his work. But not... other than that I think that it pretty much.... It changes the role of the Cantor from being the pushing machine to be pushed to sing it again *mercha, munach and mapach*... again and again for examples...to becoming an inspirer, a supervisor and person who gives further enrichment on the subject or exercises, and so on and so forth.

With your permission I would like to show you the high holiday of the multi-track so called options that exist on the high holidays software that we have. Here you can see that we provide three tracks – text reading, the Lithuanian or Lita /Jerusalem, and also the *Binder*. And there are seven open tracks for you to insert whatever melody... And, as I said, this is what we are going to put into the main course as well.

(Audience member): How would you, let's say I have 40 students. I'm getting them a copy. Do I send you my tracks and you...?

No! No! No!

(Audience member): I mean, how do they...?

I'll show you what happens. Let's say we recorded initially the Lithuanian. So the program... I understand the questions, how it's done practically. The program is programmed to receive the information. You get a utility...the teacher gets a utility in which you put your tracks into it. All the MP3s that you record, you put it into a certain file in the program and either burn a CD or send it by e-mail to the student. And in it there is a little... you put in a line... there is a little utility... you type in what you want. Cantor such and such – *nusah* such and such.

(Audience member): Is there like an Install Shield, or do they have to find the right directory?

No, they have to put... either... I think it's social desire way of looking... All it does is, you have to put the program into the program file that is already installed on the computer. They put it... enter it. It will go to the right places. All the files will be dispersed into the right place and now it will appear in front of you. Instead of 'Future Melody Artist' it will say 'Cantor such and such – *nusah* such and such. And you click on it, you select that, go to here, and that will be (*male singer*). And again, the same features of the... go back and forth on the... (*Flute*)

You click on the sentence and drag on the... We think it will add, perhaps, a counter here on the bar. So, if they want to back to number 1, 2, 3, 4 or something – to a specific point. We felt that clicking on the word is, considering especially the fact many words have no tropes; they might click on an *asher*, *yalda* or *yaldah* – *yal- dah* actually in this case. I'm not sure that it's the best approach to it. And you have to also, by the way, to record the tropes, you can whistle them, you can play them on your instrument, you can record in..

(Audience member): Can you explain how we use a little microphone with our computer?

Sure. Yeah! Whichever program you record, your final outcome has to be on MP3 files. You put...

(Audience member): Am I recording seven trope phrases, or am I recording these verses here?

Oh, you record the verses and then you record once for the whole program. You record the mercha tipcha the way they go and they also will go to their respective files.

(Audience member): Do you have a recording feature of... is that part of this or is this... someone's going to have to go in and then do it on your own?

Do you mean do we supply recording software? No, we don't supply recording software.

(Audience member): In terms of naming technology of saving the files to...

MP3...that's all there...

(Audience member): I'm saying is it *pazer* MP3s...

Oh. This is already made. You will record a *pazer* into the file so called *pazer*... into the *pazer* that you recorded...you put into the file that is in the program called *pazer* and it will change the name for you.

(Audience member): Oh, you'll import MP3s and it will...

Right! It will arrange for you. All you do, you just bring your finished MP3; put them in the file; it will do whatever it needs to do and rename them to the program needs.

(Audience member): You still need to be someone technically sound.

Not really, it's very, very simple. (Laughter)
Can I show? (Background – "We still have five more minutes.")

OK! Does anybody care to see the technology of it or is there something that you... I think that Steven is very concerned about the... You know what, I'll show you up to it.

OK, all right. I just wanted to show you. It's really... there is nothing there to do. It's less complicated than using Word. So, for instance, if you chose 'text reading', or if you chose... In that case, if you chose to insert the whole interpretation text, you want to give to the *Bar Mitzvah* student ideas about interpretation of the *Torah*. So, in this case, it will talk the whole time about what's the meaning... (Male voice in background) It will say whatever you've recorded in it. So you can insert.

We also most likely will insert a 'comment' button someplace here along the line, where you can insert your comments and thoughts about... Well, in this passage we're talking about such and such ideas to prepare for your speech...

(Audience member): Text...?

No! No! No! For you to speak it. Well, do you prefer text?

(Audience member): Can you do pop-ups on there?

We could, if you want. Is this something that you would like to see? How many people would like to see pop-ups? How about the comments – speech comments – the room to be able to insert comments about the subject? No so...oh...well...ok. So, in any case, I think that I have covered most of what they wanted.

I would like to just very briefly (in one minute) cover the following. If you are using it in a classroom in a school setting, I would suggest the following – Introduction to Tropes...and Tropes Grammar, to be introduced during grade six. I think this is about right and I think that's probably what most people do anyhow. Am I correct?

(Audience member): In Day School we may do it earlier.

Ok! In Day School... but I'm saying, in a synagogue setting. Grade seven -- *Haftarah* Tropes and Creating With Tropes.

(Audience member): ...at least introduce it to them earlier...

All right! The other point I wanted to make is only about core notes versus decorations. Decorations are great. When the kids add their little *dreidle*, they start to be interpreters. You know? Do not judge them... correct them. Let them do it. I think it's very important. Let's not forget that trope is a living system and that the melodies that we use today... the melodies that we use today are different than the melodies of 300 years ago. And, for sure, much different than the melodies that were used 600 years ago – at the time, perhaps, when the *Minhag of Bar Mitzvah* started.

The musical skills alone have changed since then. So the music itself will continue to change. I believe that probably out of the melding of cultures in Israel will come something... Today in Israel you can feel so many variants of tropes that come from somebody that is a little bit of Moroccan and a little bit of Algerian, with a little bit of a *touch of Yemenite*... you know, at the same time. And still they are exposed to the most common Lita/Y'rushalayim that is most commonly used by *Ashkenazim* in Israel. And out of it will come other systems. So, I think that we have to be open to it, to let it happen, and I think, therefore, it's very important that we keep an open mind about it.

(Audience member): Question! I know it's probably very cumbersome to do it all in memory, there's a lot of memory involved and obviously a lot of time and expense, but is there any thought given to (not the high holidays) but to the *Torah* or other variation tropes? Again, when comparing to *Trope Trainer*... *Trope Trainer* is about age 10 to 12, they're pre-installed.

Pre-installed...yes.

(Audience member): And this might be a great thing. You can set up an Internet database, where...

Actually, yeah!

(Audience member): ...where that would be...

That's a very good idea. Both are very excellent. By the way, once you have the tracks... for instance, for the high holidays, if you know that you have a Cantor friend who is in the next town, who uses...has a high voice, and you need something with a very high voice for somebody, you can ask him... Give me a track, and you plunk it in, and you can give him yours... an exchange. It's always available, so you can use it... You know, there could be a database of tracks to share.

(Audience member): I mean, to have all your users recreate the wheel may be cumbersome for a significant number of users, but if you can have available, you know; really, what do you need – 20, 30 users to resubmit their work on your website. And then you can have...

Definitely, this is one of the things that we advertise. You can use other Cantor's CTB, Chant the Bible, tracks to insert into your program. But I think that Sheldon's question was, why not pre-include the tracks, if I understood.

Yeah, we're thinking of for sure including the Binder in there. We have overwhelming requests from the Reform Movement, using the Binder inserted. And, definitely we will insert... and most likely will insert text reading as well. So these are the two we will for sure insert – pre-insert.

I thank you very, very much.

(Applause)

Sheldon Levin

We thank you very, very much for an amazing amount of project work you've done on this. I'm sure he's available still at the table or for individual private sessions if you want.

(Background comment from Audience member): I really liked the tutorials. The tutorials of your system are so much better than anything else out there. The quizzes and the puzzles of your system have really been a very good tool. I've used them with my students.

Thank you....